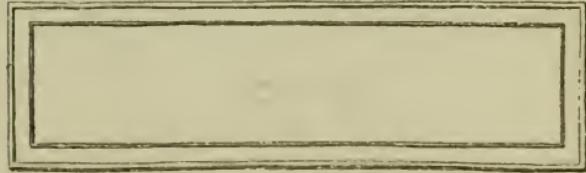
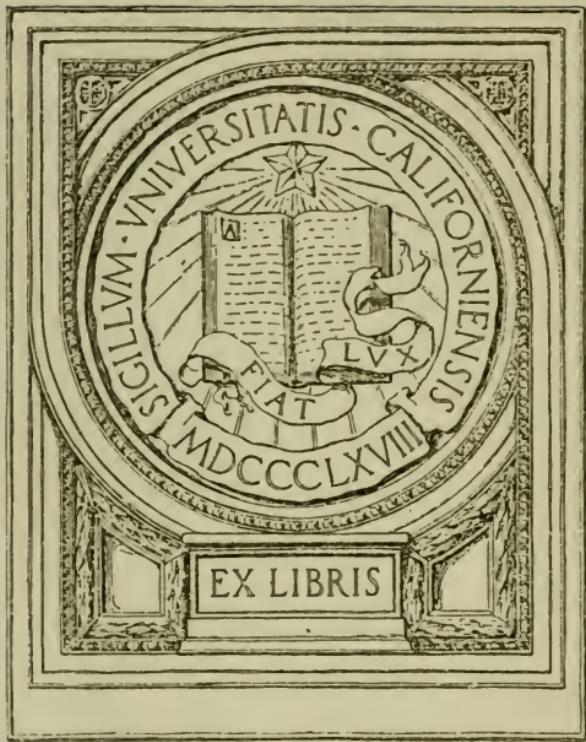


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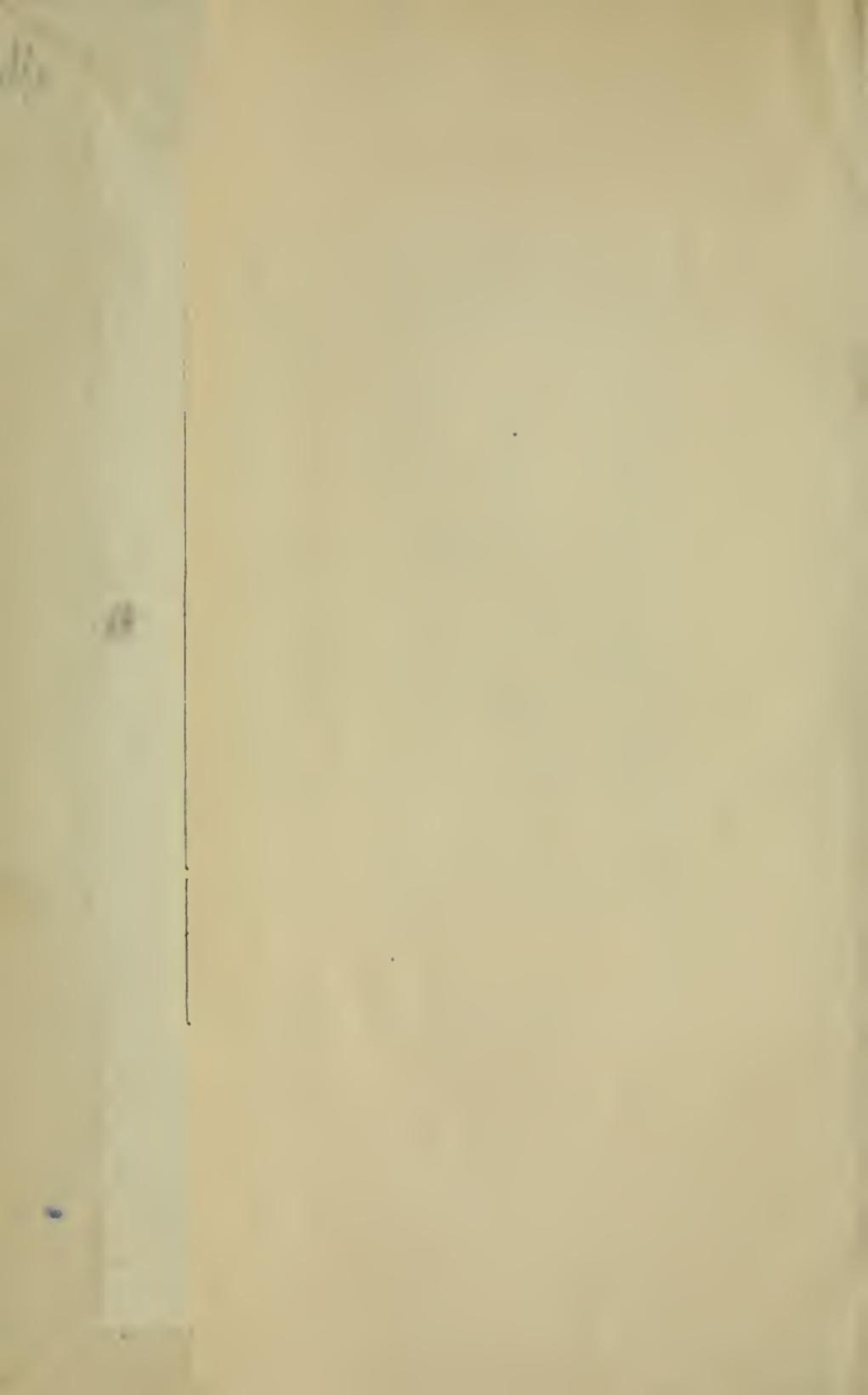
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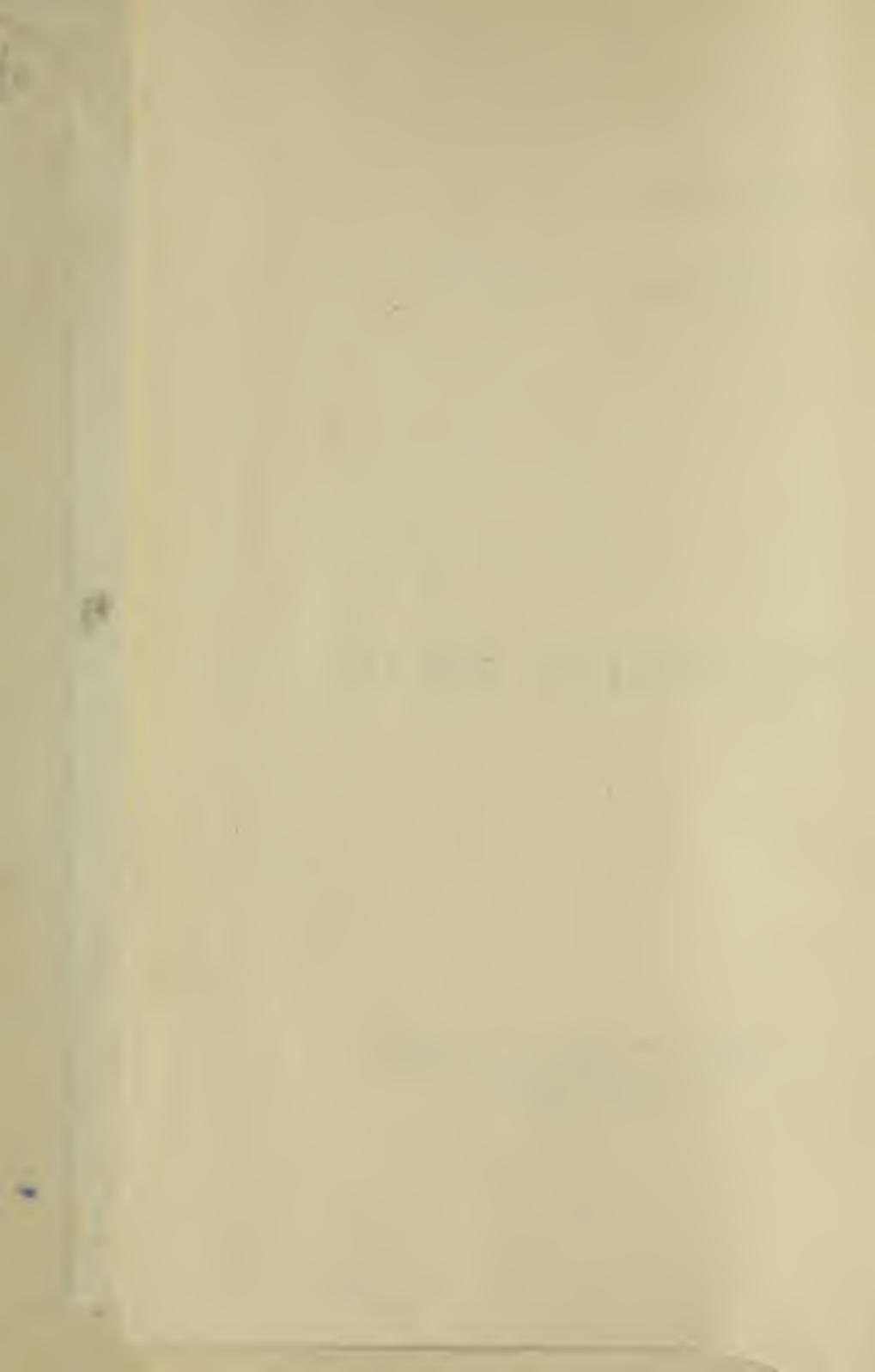
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*The Gaekwad Studies
in
Religion and Philosophy: IV.*

ZOROASTRIAN ETHICS

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LAWRENCE
CALIFORNIA
ZOROASTRIAN ETHICS

By

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P R E F A C E

The present small volume was undertaken as one subject of study as Fellow in the Seminar for the Comparative Study of Religions established in the College, Baroda, by His Highness the Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaekwad, K. C. S. I. etc. The subject was suggested by Professor Widgery who also guided the author in the plan and in the general working out of the theme. It is his hope that companion volumes on the ethical ideas associated with other religions will shortly be undertaken. Such ethical studies form an important part of the aim which His Highness had in view in establishing the Seminar. The chapter which treats of the religious conceptions is less elaborate than it might well have been, because Dr. Dhalla's masterly volume on *Zoroastrian Theology*, New York, 1914, cannot be dispensed with by any genuine student of Zoroastrianism, and all important details may be learned

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from it. It only remains to thank Professor Widgery for writing a general introduction and for his continued help throughout the process of the work.

MAGANLAL A. BUCH

Baroda, 1919.

LAWRENCE,
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INTRODUCTION

The age in which we live is distinguished in many ways by its realism. In the realm of "the practical" there is a wide-spread impatience amongst the educated against the dominance of traditional ideas tending to limit the scope of enjoyment of the good or to sacrifice concrete experience for the sake of abstractions. In the realm of thought itself there has been and is a decided revolt against the over emphasis of abstract universal principles as distinct from actual particulars with their individual characteristics. This attitude is more or less common in relation to all branches of thought: its significance for ethics is especially important. Men ask that the reflections of moral philosophers shall have some real and important bearing on the problem of what the moral life should contain and how it should be lived. Ethics is required to have a definite and intimate relation with the individual details of morality and not to remain in the discussion of the purely formal. From the spirit of Kant ethics now turns again to the spirit of Aristotle.

Though the view that the good cannot be defined has incidentally been implied at various times in the history of moral philosophy, it is only within recent years that its true import has begun to be realised. In the first place it involves that moral experience is immediate, that the knowledge included in any science of ethics, though it may be knowledge by description, is dependent upon knowledge by direct acquaintance. Moral good is known in some form of intuition, and is intelligible only in terms of itself. In the second place it has become more and more evident that all attempts to explain moral good in a general manner, e.g. as duty, or as that which brings the greatest amount of pleasure, or as the way of deliverance, or as self-realisation, and so on, are of only secondary value and importance.

The chief result of these modern tendencies with relation to the science of ethics is to make it much more empirical. In the ethics of the past there has been much keen discussion of abstract principles and ultimate problems, but too often this discussion has had little relation to the ethical facts of actual life. The attempt to bring about a closer relation has

involved a superimposition of the principles upon actual conduct as it were from without. In consequence the conceptions of the moral ideal have almost all lacked content, have, in fact, been conspicuous by their poverty. As Spinoza in order to give an account of substance had to pass almost immediately to the attributes of thought and extension and then in order to explain these had to pass on to modes, thus eventually taking in the immediate experiences of actual life, so ethical writers in order to bring their conceptions into touch with facts have been forced back to particular experiences. From these only can we begin if we wish for an understanding of what the moral life includes in detail. In other words, the science of ethics must be regarded as a natural science concerned with the data of moral life.

By "Ethics" as a science we understand the effort to come to a complete and systematic comprehension of the moral life, in a manner similar to that in which, for example, the science of botany is concerned with the comprehension of all the forms of plant-life and the relations between these forms. The first task, therefore, is a survey of the facts of

morality. The facts with which it is necessary to begin in order to form a science of ethics are moral judgments. These judgments are to be grouped as clearly as possible into classes and the relationship between the facts and the classes surveyed with the hope of finding general principles and forming a whole as coherent and complete as possible. Ethics might be divided as follows in a manner similar to a division elsewhere adopted for the study of Theology.*

ETHICS.

I. EMPIRICAL ETHICS. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The psychological facts of the Moral Life. b. The History of Moral Systems. c. The Comparative Study of Moral Systems. 	II. MORAL PHILOSOPHY. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Critical (Examination of empirical data) b. Constructive (Formation of ideal system).
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In the realm of ethics as in any other branch of knowledge there seems no adequate ground for any claim to the actual possession of a complete coherent system of moral goods. Here as elsewhere humanity is concerned with developing knowledge. The course of the development will be an important consideration for understanding the system.

* The Comparative Study of Religions. Baroda, 1919 p. 10.

Brief reflection on this view of the science of ethics will lead to the recognition that it implies that the human mind possesses a capacity for making moral judgments. Equally important is the necessity of acknowledging the historical development of ethical knowledge. The ultimate problem of the relation between these two is similar to that involved in all knowledge : the recognition of reason as in some manner absolute and not merely relative must be united with the acceptance of a theory of evolution of knowledge. It appears alike impossible to deny either the power of reason or the evolution of knowledge. The only way in which they may be united is to regard the evolution or development of knowledge as dependent on the increasing degree with which reason comes into relation with its subject matter in any particular branch of experience. This may be either by a closer contact with details or by attention to new parts of experience.

A survey of the actual course of history suggests that the advance of ethical as of other knowledge is chiefly due to the accumulation of a large number of small contributions made

by a large number of individual workers. Nevertheless, in every sphere, and certainly not least in morality, there are individuals with a remarkable degree of "insight" or special capacity. To them are due radical changes and great advances, even though these have usually been prepared for by the efforts of the many. It is not in contradiction with the belief in the evolution of knowledge that some such individuals have attained an intuition or immediate acquaintance with one or more aspects of the good with a clearness which others even after them have never independently reached. Obviously, the majority of men, even the majority of enlightened men, of to-day, have not the degree of philosophical capacity and knowledge possessed by Plato and Aristotle. But we do not, in consequence, deny the reality of any evolution of knowledge. For part of this evolution is that of bringing more men to the appreciation of the knowledge which profound earlier minds attained, and to its detailed application.

The general practice of men in ordinary life accords with this contention : for when, apart from public opinion, they look for knowledge

of the requirements of morality, they turn to the great moral teachers of the race. In the attempt to form a science of ethics a similar method must be in part adopted. In the moral judgments of outstanding moral teachers are to be found the most important facts for the science. The study of the writings in which these judgments and those of the more prominent followers of these teachers are embodied, will have the task of systematising the judgments and relating the various groups together in order to arrive at a knowledge of what the moral life includes. The examination of the groups of particular judgments should lead to the recognition of the principles which unite them in such groups.

Though the moral judgments of saints and moral teachers are the most important part of the data of ethics, advance in ethics depends partly on advance in other branches of knowledge. For this reason, if for no other, it is not possible for us to be satisfied solely with judgments made at a time when any particular necessary knowledge was not available. We may take an example. The advance of medical knowledge tends to give good reasons for

the insistence on the moral judgment found amongst most peoples against the marriage of persons closely related by blood. What may have appeared arbitrary is now seen to accord with facts of nature. The advance of medical science enables man to ascertain more or less accurately how far the abstinence from inter-marriage should go. On the other hand much of the keenness and force of the moral disapproval of promiscuous sexual relations has been due to the cognisance of the possible evil physical results. Let us suppose, as seems probable, that medical science should eventually find an absolutely reliable means of preventing these results. This would not constitute an overthrow of the moral judgment against promiscuous sex relationships: rather it would throw the emphasis on the genuinely moral aspect by taking the attention from the merely physical consequences. Increased knowledge of the conditions necessary for the best moral life of the individual and for the stability of the social organisation would then form a much higher inducement to abstain from breaking moral laws in this direction. For ethics more important than all else is the moral judgment

itself, in this instance the insistence on the intrinsic worth of chastity and purity as such.

The aim of a scientific ethics should be in the first place to throw into relief the goods which are intrinsically ethical as distinct from other goods, such as the religious. The relation of the moral to the non-moral may then be treated as a separate subsidiary question. The failure to make clear the distinctions thus implied has led to hindrances to moral progress by reason of confusions resulting, for example, in regarding as authoritatively religious some obsolete precepts of an earlier ethical attitude, or again in the retention of practices as moral which are simply the practical application, for obviously prudential reasons, of early ideas on physiology or sanitation. These are, it need hardly be said, not the defects of philosophical systems of ethics, but of the more practical codes of moral duties, found most frequently in the sacred writings of the religions.



A survey of moral judgments in a particular literature, such as is attempted here, is also required for other sacred literatures. Various reasons led us to commence with the literature of Zoroastrianism. The ethical character of Zoroastrianism has always been recognised in a general way and frequently eulogised. We wish that the matter should be considered systematically and in detail. Another significant reason is the essentially practical character of the moral precepts of Zoroastrianism. To whatever heights the moral life might attain, here at least are some of the most universal aspects of it as lived in this world. The practical character of the Zoroastrian ethics may be a cause for Parsis taking so definite a part in modern Indian commercial and industrial life. A fuller appreciation of the virtues emphasised in the following pages is required amongst some non-Zoroastrian circles of Indian society. In saying this it is not meant to imply that the Zoroastrian system as a whole is superior to that of any other system in India or elsewhere: the question simply concerns the need of greater attention to these particular virtues.

Zoroastrian ethics impress one with a remarkable vigour, giving reality and earnestness to the moral life. Whatever objections may be made to the view, the idea of a radical distinction between the good and the bad is the ground of this vigour. Historically the insistence on the reality of the conflict may have become thus pronounced on account of actual struggles in which Zarathushtra was involved. It is open to question whether amongst the Parsis in India the struggle of the good against the bad has not in recent times assumed too individualistic a form, whereas for Zarathushtra and for the greater part of Parsi literature the conflict was most probably far more social.

The general character of the ethics suggests a certain *Lebensweisheit*, a *savoir vivre*. There is a healthy recognition of physical goods and of the duty of striving for them. In the distinction between the different types of occupation, there is an admirable absence of any depreciation of manual labour as compared with (so-called) intellectual occupations, a depreciation otherwise very wide-spread. In India, especially, it would be an advantage if this attitude of the Zoroastrian ethics were

more widely adopted in practice. I can conceive of no way in which a wealthy Parsi might better carry out the spirit and the letter of the Parsi moral code than by the encouragement of agriculture. It is no excuse to maintain that the practical precepts with regard to agriculture were for another age or for particular individuals ; human life depends now as much as ever on their fulfilment. The main difference in this direction between the present and the past is that today there is urgent need for attention to scientific methods. Parsis, individually or communally, might adhere more closely to their moral precepts by doing something definitely for advance in this direction.

The breadth of the Zoroastrian moral ideal, with its physical and its spiritual goods, admirable though it is, is associated with too little emphasis on the duty of intellectual effort and the search for knowledge. The peoples which have come most definitely under the influence of Zoroastrianism do not rank among the first in intellectual research with regard to the scientific study of nature or of history or of philosophy. The insistence on “right thought” and “right word” is not often

applied in such a manner as to encourage a life of scholarship.*

More serious than this, its very "*Lebensweisheit*" seems to militate against the virtue of self-sacrifice. In the literature that is left to us it is difficult to find much reference to self-sacrifice of any kind.† This is in harmony also with the almost complete absence of asceticism, and of any thing which suggests a form of mysticism. If on the one hand the sane practicality, common sense, and the virility of Zoroastrian ethics are aspects to which the attention of non-Zoroastrians may be directed, on the other hand the ethics of non-Zoroastrians may present other aspects of the moral life which to the Zoroastrian breadth will add a greater depth.

The Zoroastrian system of ethics, as most historical systems, has a theological background; to this, for the reason mentioned in the preface, the author refers only briefly. The significant fact is, however, worth emphasising here that

* In the nineteenth century and since many scholarly dasturs have devoted themselves strenuously to the study of their sacred scriptures.

† The part played by "charity" in Parsi morality is not thus denied. See Chapter VIII.

the system contains no evidence of any pantheistic conception of reality. In this, Zoroastrianism is in agreement with other fundamentally ethical systems, such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It may, therefore, be suggested that closer consideration of the nature of moral distinctions and their implications would tend to a modification and even abandonment of the essentially pantheistic systems. The empirical study of the facts of the different moral codes, especially in their historical development may have a greater influence on philosophical opinions than has yet been the case.

The aim of the science of ethics being to arrive at an accurate and complete statement of the contents of the moral life in their relationship as judged by the moral consciousness, it may be reasonably supposed that no particular existent system is complete. Completeness may gradually be obtained by the development and comparison of the different systems. In such comparison, though insistence on the aspects of similarity may strengthen conviction concerning the validity of these aspects, a wider and richer view than any will

be obtained only by due attention to the differences, especially those which supplement the common elements. At present the best way to aid in the attainment of a wider knowledge of the ideal is by careful systematic study of individual systems upon a common plan.

From the foregoing the impression may easily be formed that the ideal to the complete knowledge of which we wish to attain is eclectic, a kind of sum total of different good qualities and relations, but with no one dominant principle. This impression is not justifiable. For though no reference has yet been made to any such dominant principle of the moral life, it is not therefore meant that a survey of the different systems together might not lead to the recognition of such a principle. What is insisted upon is that from no principle does it appear possible to deduce, without empirical consideration, all the goods which the moral life includes. In the following account of Zoroastrian ethics several fundamental principles are emphasised, but personally I do not find any one supreme principle. The only principle of which I am at all aware, which might serve the purpose of

unifying the elements of the moral life, is one which, found definitely in the literature of the Jews, has become central in the ethics of Christianity, *the principle of love*. The warning is perhaps necessary that, — viewed as the supreme unifying principle of the moral life — love implies no feeble sentimentalism but simply and solely the motive of an active service binding together all the individual moral virtues.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AnAtM	Andarz-i Atarpat-i Maraspand.
AV.	Arda Viraf.
Bd.	Bundahishn.
Db.	Dabistan.
Dd.	Dadistan-i Dinik.
Dk.	Dinkard.
E.B.	Encyclopædia Britannica, 11th Edition.
ERE.	Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics (Hastings).
G.	Gah.
Gs.	Gang-i Shayigan.
Mkh.	Menuk-i Khrat.
Ny.	Nyaish.
SBE.	Sacred Books of the East.
Sd.	Sad Dar.
Sg.	Shikand Gumanik Vijar.
SIS.	Shayast-la-Shayast.
TdFr.	Tahmuras Fragment.
Vd.	Vendidad.
Vsp.	Visperad.
Ys.	Yasna.
Yt.	Yasht.

ZOROASTRIAN ETHICS

PART I

Preliminary

Before embarking upon the special study of Zoroastrian Ethics three preliminary enquiries are necessary: these we intend to undertake very briefly.

- A.* The question as to the character of the literature available for the study.
- B.* The social and historical conditions, so far as they can be known, in which the moral ideas arose and the changes and modifications were made.
- C.* The problem concerning the psychological nature of man, as understood by the authors of this literature, so far as these psychological views have a bearing on ethical questions.

ZOROASTRIAN LITERATURE

CHAPTER I

A. THE AVAILABLE ZOROASTRIAN LITERATURE

The early Zoroastrian literature falls into two main divisions : the Avestan and the Pahlavi.

I. The Avestan writings which have come down to us are only a fragment of the ancient literature much of which has perished. These consist of (a) the *Yasna*, including the *Gathas*, (b) *Visperad*, (c) *Yashta*, (d) *Vendidad*.

(a) *Yasna* is derived from *zaz* = to praise, to invoke, or to worship. It is recited in its entirety in the *Yasna* ceremony. The whole book consists of seventy-two chapters. It may be divided into three parts : the *Gathas*; *Yasna* of the seven chapters; and the remaining parts of the *Yasna* which forms a later part. The *Gathas* (*rt. ga* = to sing)

are psalms. There are five divisions consisting of 17 hymns. Roughly we may, with Dr. J. H. Moulton, assign to these the date 1000 B. C. The *Yasna* of the seven chapters is a prose writing, consisting of prayers. The later *Yasna* is also full of prayers associated with sacred objects. Zarathustra is the dominating personality in the whole Avestan literature and particularly in the *Gathas*.

- (b) *Visperad* (Av. *vispe rataro* ‘all the lords’) resembles the *Yasna* in language, form and subject.
- (c) The *Yashts* (Av. *Yeshi* ‘worship by praise’) form a poetical collection of 21 hymns, glorifying the angels and heroes of ancient Iran.
- (d) The *Vendidad* (*vi-daeva-data*=‘the law against the demons’) is a priestly code of laws, written in the form of a prose dialogue between Ahura-Mazda and Zarathustra, containing an account of the various kinds of purification, expiations and penalties. It may be located in the post-Alexandrian period.

II. *Pahlavi* ('Parthian,' i. e. 'belonging to heroic times') or Middle Persian literature dates from the 3rd century A. D. to the 9th century A. D. It is not an abrupt growth, but has its roots in the Avestan writing. The contents of the Avestan books are explained and elaborated in the Pahlavi writing. Zoroaster appears no longer as a merely historical personage but is transformed practically into a superhuman being. The concepts of the Gathic period lose something of their original character and become more definite, formal, and stereotyped.

Andarz-i Atrepat-i Maraspandan contains precepts concerning religion and worldliness delivered by Dasturan Dastur Adarbad Mah-respond to his son Zarthost. It was written in the time of Hormazd Shapur, the grandson of the founder of the Sassanian dynasty.

The Arda-Viraf, written about the fifth or sixth century A. D., sets forth descriptions of heaven and hell, as related by Arda-Viraf, who is supposed to have visited them.

'*Ganj-i-Shayigan*' was written in the reign of Noshirwan the Just, about 505 A. D., by his minister Vizorg-Meher. It distinguishes

between permanent and evanescent wealth and lays down precepts to acquire such wealth as is permanent, and conducive to the true happiness of mankind.

The Dinai-Menuk-i-Khrat ('opinions of the spirit of wisdom') was written in the sixth century, by a devoted Mazda-worshipper. It contains questions on religion answered by the spirit of wisdom.

The Shayast-la-Shayast ('the proper and the improper') contains miscellaneous laws and customs regarding sins, impurities and religious ceremonies. It was probably written before the Muslim conquest. (A. D. 636-651).

The Shikand-Gumanik Vijar ('doubt-dispelling explanation') is a controversial work, which attempts to prove that good and evil do not come from the same source. It criticizes the attitude of Judaism, of Christianity, and Manichaeanism. It was written after the middle, but before the end of the 9th century.

The Dinkard ('Acts of the Religion'), the greatest of the Pahlavi works of the period, was compiled by a high-priest, during the ninth century. It is 'a large collection of information regarding the doctrines, customs,

traditions, and literature of the Mazda-worshipping religion.' (E. W. West).

The Dadistan-i-Dinik ('religious opinions or decisions') contains ninety-two questions on religious subjects put to a high priest with the answers given by him. It was written some years before 881 A. D.

The Epistles of Manushchihar give some light upon the condition of the Mazda-worshippers at the time. (A. D. 881).

The Bundahishn ('original creation') deals with the cosmogony, mythology, eschatology of the Zoroastrian faith, having been written about A. D. 886.

Aiyadgari-Zariran i. e., The Memoir of Zarir. Referring to it, Firdausi says in his introduction to Shah Namah :—“There was a book of ancient times which contained many episodes. It was scattered in the hands of different Mobeds.....There was a Pehelwan of the family of the Dehkans.....He was fond of collecting materials for the history of ancient times. So he called aged Mobeds from all parts of the country and collected the historical works.....These great men narrated before him the accounts of the kings and of the events

of the world. When that great man heard from them the narratives, he laid on them the foundation of a great book. Thus (the work) became a memoir in the world."

The Bahman Yashht was written after Iran had been over-run by a foreign race subsequent to the reign of Khusrd Noshirvan. It professes to be Ahura-Mazda's revelation to Zoroaster about the future of the Iranian nation.

The Desatir professes to be a collection of the different Persian Prophets, who flourished from the time of Mahabad to the time of the fifth Sasan, being fifteen in number; of whom Zerdusht, or Zoroaster was the thirteenth and the fifth Sasan the last. It is written in a language different from the Avestan and Pahlavi.

The Sud-dar ('a treatise on one hundred subjects') is written in Persian. The opinion in the early part of the 16th century was that this is very old, but we have no reliable evidence concerning the date of its authorship. The book deals with various religious duties and customs. The tone of complete submission to priestly control characterises the book as written in a period of subjection.

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS*

An account of the ethical ideas evolved by the Iranian people in successive ages of their history, demands as a preliminary a brief description of the actual social conditions of the people in the different epochs. Only when these ideas are placed in their right historic setting and viewed in the light of the general conditions of civilization in which they rose to prominence, can their merely temporary aspects be distinguished from what may be of permanent worth. The prominence of certain beliefs in certain ages, and the comparative insignificance of others depend necessarily upon the general social conditions which fostered the former and neglected the latter.

* This chapter is based chiefly upon Geiger; and the article "Ancient Persia," Encyclopaedia Britannica. 11th ed.

For first consideration is the civilization of the Gathic and the later Avestan periods. The Gathic Age may well be located around 1000 B.C., and the Avestan period from about 800 B.C. to 200 A.D. The Pahlavi period then commences and ends with the ninth century.

An examination of the existing evidence leads one to the generally accepted belief in the Aryan origin of the Iranian people. Indeed, in the Avestan writings themselves there are frequent references to it. Their country is called *Airyana-vaeja* (Iran, the land of the Aryans). Possibly the Avestan people arose as a distinct people in Eastern Iran and then spread themselves over the other parts of Persia.

Even so early as the time of the *Gathas*, the Iranians were in a transitional stage with regard to their mode of life. They were no longer nomadic. In fact, they were already passing from the pastoral to the agricultural stage of civilization. Here, however, a difference between the Gathic Age and the later Avestan Age may be noted. The chief object of attention in the former was the cow. 'Cattle-breeding' appears to have been the main occupation of the people,

compared with which all agricultural interests occupied a subordinate place. This suggests that the people were at that time passing from the nomadic life to a more settled form of existence. The careful rearing of cattle on a large scale depends for its success partly upon a settled state of living. And a stable existence leads eventually to methodical cultivation of the soil. The cow is said to despise other masters and to favour peasants only. In the later writings of the *Avesta*, agriculture assumes a position of importance equal at least to that of cattle-rearing. For example, the *Vendidad* gives a list of the following meritorious works indicating forcibly the character of the existing social conditions : I. Piety and a law-abiding course of life ; II. The founding of a permanent household ; III. The cultivation of grain, of fodder for cattle, and the planting of trees ; IV. The breeding of sheep and cows.¹ The art of cultivating the land becomes specialised ; wells and canals are made to further agricultural operations.

A second important difference must be noticed. In the Gathic age, Zoroastrianism

¹ Vd. III 1-5.

was not established; it was only introduced. This introduction was no less than a religious revolution, accompanied with all its symptoms of conflict of new and old. But the faith was tolerably well established when we come to the later *Avesta*.

The early civilization was above all an agricultural civilization. The clearing of forests, the tilling of the soil, were objects of supreme importance. The cow, the dog, the cock, the she-camel were especially cared for on account of their great usefulness to a farming population and human conduct towards them was brought under moral precepts. The dog was regarded as a friend of man, because it protected cattle and flocks : hence all injuries to dogs were severely punished. Tender care must be extended to female dogs who were pregnant. Hot food was not to be given to them. The horse derived his chief value from his employment in warfare. The camel was indispensable for traversing surrounding deserts, and covering great distances in short time. The cock is referred to in connection with early rising, an essential for an agricultural civilization. Sheep, goats and the ass are also

mentioned in the earliest literature. During the Avestan period agriculture attained a considerable degree of development. The followers of the Mazdayasnian faith were asked to fight against all sterility and waste. Further, we may note the development of horticulture and of artificial irrigation, and the construction of wells and canals.

Manufacture received gradually increasing attention. A considerable development of it implied the existence of a special class of handicraftsmen. Metals were worked with skill. Gold was esteemed the most precious metal and jewels were made of it. Next to it was silver. Much use was made of brass or bronze in the manufacture of weapons. Copper was used. Tiles were prepared. But glass was not known. Chariots are frequently mentioned.

The art of medicine received attention. In the *Vendidad* we find that care is demanded in the treatment of the diseased. Medical treatment was extended to beasts also.

Though coined money does not seem to have been used, considerable progress was made in commerce. Exchange was effected through

the medium mainly of domestic animals. For example, the fee for the cure of a son of a family of a certain social standing was a horse.

All this presupposes an evolution to a certain degree of a regular constitution of society. In fact the state had very early emerged into a distinct existence. It was composed of five divisions: the family, the village or clan, the town or tribe, the district and the province. The family was the unit of society, not the individual. The village was a group of families. The township did not possess much real influence. The idea of a district occurs in the *Gathas*. It contained many settlements occupied by one or more races. Lastly there was the "country," chiefly a geographical expression. At the head of every family was the master of the house. Similarly, there was the master of the village and the master of the tribe. Over the whole province or country was the king. Each head enjoyed a substantial measure of authority in his own sphere. The king was called Yima (the rich in flocks) and also an 'armed ruler.' Traces are found of a conflict between the priestly and the political class. The power of these heads was not

unlimited. We hear of popular assemblies, which were opened with prayer. To shine in these assemblies was a great distinction.

The rise and growth of Zoroastrianism was not entirely peaceful. From the beginning a constant warfare was waged between the Zoroastrians and the non-Zoroastrians. The *Gathas* give sufficient evidence of perpetual feuds. The atmosphere in which the first sermons of the faith were preached was anything but a quietistic atmosphere of religious peace; it was full of turmoil between antagonistic ideas. The conflict was a double one; the one between the Aryans and the non-Aryans in general and between the "believers" and the "unbelievers" among the Iranians themselves. The struggle between the latter was economic as well as religious. It was a struggle between the pious, stable, husbandmen, devoted to Ahura Mazda, and attached to the rearing of cows, and the restless, nomadic elements which persisted in injuring agriculture and in disregarding the new faith. This struggle lasts through the Avestan period.

The adversaries of the faith were called *daivas* or demons. They were also stigmatized

as *drujas*. They often made sudden inroads into the cultivated districts of the Zoroastrians and carried away captives.² That they were called *daevas* and *drujas* shows the contempt with which they were regarded. This actual historical conflict led to the expression of the nature of morality as a struggle against evil powers. Under the circumstances, the people were bound to be warlike. Wars being common led to a special recognition of martial virtues. Men prayed not only for cattle and fields, but also for 'troops of warriors.' Armies were organized by the kings.

A high position was assigned to the priesthood. The *Avesta* was their creation. They called themselves *Athravans* or fire-priests. They offered prayers and performed the sacrifices; tended the sacred fire and prepared the Haoma-drink. They encroached little if at all on the functions of the secular government, maintaining themselves by earnings from medical practice and the performance of purificatory ceremonies. In the *Gathas*, no clear lines are drawn between social classes, but in the later *Avesta*, mention is made of

² Vd. III. 11.

three classes: priests, warriors, and peasants. Possibly "manufacturers" formed a fourth class. Lastly, there was a class of slaves, either captives of war or persons who had pawned away their freedom.

Gradually the Zoroastrian faith became firmly established and society attained a more compact organization and a high degree of civilization. The Persians overthrew the Medians and established a great empire. Eduard Meyer says that they felt that they had a great mission to rule the civilized world and to reduce it to unity. The subject races were generously dealt with. The Persians swore allegiance to the king, and he protected them. All judicial and administrative decisions were based on the advice of the leaders of the people. There were twenty provinces in the time of Darius I., each under a governor. Each was divided into minor governorships. There were imperial highways, regularly provided with postal stations, which facilitated communication. Money currency was introduced about the 4th century B. C. Still payment in kind was often the rule in the court. The society progressed in many other ways. Darius

founded harbours, completed a great canal from the Nile to Suez. What the religion of the Persian kings of the empire was is a matter of question. Zoroastrianism undoubtedly continued in the empire, and may have been carried beyond its boundaries. Whether it was supreme or not, important modifications took place in it, as may be noticed from the evidence of the inscriptions of the kings. The Persians began to deteriorate under the influences of luxurious life. Later the Greeks under Alexander conquered Persia. They are said to have destroyed the greater part of the Zoroastrian literature. The decaying faith again revived under the Parthians, but the Avestan language was replaced by the Pahlavi or Parthian.

The Sassanian Empire, inaugurated by Ardashir I. marks a turning-point in the history of Persia. Image-worship was abolished; and a belief in one god restored. The remaining Avestan literature was collected and arranged. The priesthood was reinstated in a position of importance. Ardashir believed that "the altar and the throne were always inseparable and must always sustain each other," The Sassanian

period forms a brilliant page in the history of Zoroastrianism. But during it various attempts were made to set up hostile sects. The most important of these was Manichæism, founded by Mani. Whether a heresy within Zoroastrianism or not it was opposed to the spirit of the Zoroastrian faith. "According to the Manichæan view the admixture of Light and Darkness which gave rise to the material universe was essentially evil....All that tends to the prolongation of this state of admixture of Light and Darkness, such as marriage and begetting of children, is consequently regarded by Mani and his followers as evil and reprehensible. Manichæism was cosmopolitan, quietistic, ascetic and unworldly."⁴ This sect was suppressed by Shapur II. Another heretical sect appeared under the lead of Mazdak who taught a form of communism.

But a spirit of indifference came over the people in the time of the later Sassanians. With the success of the Arabs, this brought about the downfall of the faith: only some thousands remained followers and many of these migrated to India.

⁴ E.G. Browne, "*A Literary History of Persia.*" pp.160-162.

CHAPTER III

C. PSYCHOLOGICAL CONCEPTIONS*

Advance in ethical ideas can take place in a society only after it attains a certain amount of knowledge concerning the nature of the human mind. Ethical principles should be considered in relation to human capacities. Though the Persian mind was fond of making psychological distinctions, the extant literature gives no evidence of an analysis of the human mind anything like so detailed as that found in Jain and Buddhist works. The psychology of the *Avesta* is neither simple nor primitive, but presupposes some philosophical speculation.¹

According to the *Avesta*, the human personality consists of five elements—‘vitality’ (*ahu*),

*This section is preliminary only and does not represent a complete independent examination of the material. Much use has been made of W. Geiger. *Civilization of Ancient Iran*. Vol. I. Ch. III and Casartelli : *Philosophy of the Mazdayasnian Religion under the Sussanids*. Ch. V.

¹ Geiger I. 124. ² Ys. XXVI. 4 and 6—; Yt. XIII. 149.

'ego' (*daena*), 'perception' or 'sense' (*baodha*), 'soul' (*urvan*), and *Fravashi*.² Psychological distinctions are further developed by the Pahlavi writers. Man is divided into body and soul. The spiritual part of man was variously divided. Lists of psychological powers are given in the *Dinkard* and other writings. The generally accepted division is: *jan* (life), *ravan* (soul), *furohar* (guardian spirit), and *bod* (consciousness). Other powers are *akho* (judgment), *khart* (intelligence), *vir* (reason), *hosh* (memory), *dino* (religion), *vaksh* (conscience).

Among these elements were mysterious powers, parts of the human being, though not belonging to the individual soul and not responsible for its acts. The *Fravashis* are elements of this type. The conception of *Fravashis* is peculiar and difficult to interpret. Dr. Moulton thinks of them primarily as corresponding to the Roman *manes*. Dr. Dhalla finds that they have much in common with the Platonic ideas. Now they are referred to as parts of the human personality; now as celestial spirits. Nevertheless, they have certain well-defined characteristics. The *Fravashis* have not a mere ideal existence, but are real,

positive, spiritual entities. They constitute the highest part of man, without beginning and end. They form the essence of things, as distinguished from the accidental. Every good creature under the heavens has its *Fravashi*. Every new-born babe brings with it its own *Fravashi* who acts as its guardian spirit both during its life and after it. The conception corresponds partly with the idea of soul (*atman*) in the Hindu psychology. *Atman* is above all physical and mental planes ; it is not responsible, nor in any way affected by the thoughts, feelings or volitions of man. But while everything good and bad* has its *atman*, the *Fravashi* is connected with good creations only. Like the *Fravashi*, the *atman* does not actively interfere in the course of a human life. In short, the *Fravashis* are the agencies of Ahura Mazda to help the creation forward in its righteous endeavours and tendencies,—a task which they fulfil by each one connecting itself with one particular person or object and doing its utmost to supply that person or object with all necessary assistance.

*It may, of course, be maintained that from the point of view of *atman* the distinction of good and bad is invalid.

The *Furohars* or *Fravahars* of the Pahlavi period correspond to the *Fravashis* of the Avestan age. These possess distinct personalities and enter into the bodies by their own sweet will. But while all creatures heavenly or earthly were thought to have their *Fravashis*, the *Furohars* belong only to the earthly objects. In fact, the original conception loses much of its dignity in the later times. The *Furohars* are identified with the stars in one of the Pahlavi works.³ The *Farohar* purifies the air in the body by means of fire and thus helps to maintain life.⁴ In the post-Sassanian writings, it becomes a mere principle of digestion. In the *Revayet* of *Barzu Kavam-ul-Din*, we find : "The function of the *Farohar* is to give wholesomeness to the food which men eat and to remove every indigestible matter."⁵

The *Urvan* represents 'soul' or as Dr. Dhalla maintains 'the ego proper, the real I-ness.'⁶ It is the *Urvan* or *ravan* (so called in the Pahlavi period) which constitutes the responsible self, capable of making choice between good and

³ Mkh. 92.

⁶ Dr. Dhalla. p. 144.

⁴ Dk. III. 165, VI. 353.

⁵ Quoted in Cama Memorial Volume, 154-158.

evil and hence it becomes liable to rewards and punishments. Not only men, but animals also possess the soul.⁷ Ahura Mazda has a soul and so also have other divine beings.⁸ There is much evidence in favour of the view that the Zoroastrians believe in the pre-existence of the soul.⁹ The soul is not created along with the body ; but it enters the body from the spiritual world.¹⁰ It comes from the world above, and does not owe its existence to this world.¹¹ Similarly the soul has clearly an existence after the death of the body. It is sent to heaven or hell according as its good or evil deeds predominate. The soul requires to be protected against spiritual decay and death. The soul of a man who commits unnatural crimes, becomes extinct.¹² But this is merely a sort of stupefaction, a suspension of spiritual activities. It is said in the *Vendidad* that the soul of a man, who kills the Vanghapara dog is destroyed only for a temporary period.¹³ As regards a mortal sinner it is stated that “in his future body they (the high priests)

⁷ Ys. XXXIX. I. 2.

¹⁰ Bd. 64.

⁸ Yt. XIII. 81, 84.

¹¹ Gs. 20.

⁹ Spiegel Memorial Volume
pp. 100-105.

¹² Sd. 268.

¹³ Vd. XIII. 3.

will cut off his head once, and the last time they will make him alive again, and will inflict three night's severe punishment.”¹⁴ Lastly we may refer to the account of the *ravan* in the *Revayat of Barzu Kavam-ud-Din*. “The function of *ravan* (soul) is to restrain man from doing evil, to induce him to speak good words, and abstain from evil ones. It protects the body of man through superior wisdom, gives him an idea of heaven and hell in dream, directs him to make choice of what is good, and reject what is evil.”¹⁵

There is a reciprocal influence of body on soul and soul on body. Thus it is stated that “It is owing to (his) soul that (a man’s) body is well-warned.....And each (soul and body) is rendered dull by the weakening of the strength of the other; for, when any of the powers of the soul become enfeebled, every one of the powers of (the) body is brought to a stand-still. And when harm is done to any part of the body, injury is caused to its co-related soul. Therefore, it is owing to the purity of the soul that the body pertaining to this world becomes valuable. And the acquis-

¹⁴ SIS. 303. ¹⁵ Cama Memorial Volume 154-158.

ition of purity by the soul is through the powers of the body pertaining to this world.”¹⁶ Bodily illnesses are best removed by the recitations of the *Avesta*. Thus the cure of body is through the soul and that of the soul through the body.¹⁷ It must be understood however that the body and the soul are distinct. The body is the instrument of the soul. “The *roban* is the soul, which is the ruler over the body. Just as the head of a family conducts the household, and the rider the horse, so does the soul conduct the body.”¹⁸

Another spiritual power referred to in the *Avesta* was *daena*. Some scholars translate it by the English word ‘Conscience’; others (Moulton was one of them) by ‘self.’ Like the *Fravashi*, *daena* is largely independent of the human soul and continues after death. Unlike the *Fravashi*, a *daena* is associated with a bad man as well as a good. Different views are held as regards its exact functions. According to Dr. Geiger the *daena* or conscience is a divine power existing eternally, which unaffected by the sins of man warns him against all evil courses. According to other scholars, the

¹⁶ Dk. IV: 192. ¹⁷ Dk. IV. 224. 240. ¹⁸ Dk. VI. 353.

daena corresponded to the ego or self or individual. It is meant to emphasise the fact that each man had his own individual responsibility and an immortal ego within him, which would pass on to weal or woe.¹⁹ In the *Yasts*, the *duena* of a good man takes a bodily form after his death and encounters him, saying : "I am thine own good thoughts, words and deeds, thy *daena*."²⁰ The *daena* of a bad man similarly appears as an ugly hag. The word *dino* corresponds in the Pahlavi literature to the Avestan form *daena*. It means the religious spirit.

The *Baodha* means 'intelligence' or 'consciousness.' It participates in the responsibility of the *Urvan*. The *boi* or *bod*, of the Pahlavi literature, corresponding to the *Buodha* of the Avestan period means also consciousness, the faculty by which a man knows himself. "As the sun is the light of the world, and a lamp is (the light) of a house, so does the intellect (*bod*) animate with watchful light the lord of the house (viz. the body), and so does it animate the rider on the horse, as also it directs the master of the house to take care of the

¹⁹ Moulton p. 264.

²⁰ Yt. XXII. 11. Mkh. 19.

house, and the rider of the horse.”²¹ If the intellect departs from the body, the soul becomes much distressed, and the body insensible.²² In the *Revayat* of *Barzu Kavam-ud-Din*, the following account is given: “The function of *Boe* (spirit) is to rule over intelligence, understanding and judgment, so that each may perform its duty, and co-operate for the entire welfare of the body.”²³

Ahu means ‘life-force.’ Its existence is co-terminous with that of the body. This opinion of Dr. Geiger is, however, controverted by some Parsi scholars, who maintain that it means both bodily and spiritual life. *Ahu* is appointed to find and watch over the corporeal functions of man.²⁴ The Pahlavi *Akho*, (*Ahu* of the *Avesta*), is the power of the spiritual apprehension of good and evil. It always serves to keep man from sin.²⁵ According to one account, *Akho* passes first to the nearest fire, then to the stars, then to the moon and at last to the sun.²⁶ It is stated in the *Revayat* of *Barzu Kavam-ud-Din* that when the faculties

²¹ Dk. VI. 354.

²⁴ Dr. Geiger. V. I. 125.

²² Dk. VI. 354.

²⁵ Dk. V. 337, 338.

²³ Cama Memorial Volume

²⁶ SIS. 341-2.

depart from the body, the vital force mixes itself with the wind, whereas *akho* returns to heaven in company with the soul of the pious, because it is not affected by the sins of man. But the *ravan*, *boe*, and *frohar*, according to the *Revayat* have to account for the good and evil of man.²⁷

According to the *Gathas*²⁸ there are two types of intellects (*khratu*) and two lives (*ahu*). The two intellects are distinguished as the first and the last,²⁹ and in the later *Avesta* the one is called *asno khratu* 'the original intellect,' the other is called '*Jaoshi shroto khratu*' 'the wisdom obtained by the ear.' Wisdom obtained through the former source is superior in validity to the latter. The two lives are distinguished as bodily and mental; they correspond to our body and soul.

The intellectual faculties mentioned in the Pahlavi writings are *khart*, *vir* and *hosh*. *Khart* is intelligence. It is of two kinds, innate intelligence and acquired intelligence. An account is given of both in the following passage. "Be it known that the happiness

²⁷ Cama Memorial Volume 154-158.

²⁸ Haug. p. 310. ²⁹ Ys. XLIV. 19. Haug p. 310.

of the soul is desired in two ways : One, by means of the power of innate reason pertaining to the soul, which is (a principle) for sending out the inner movements (thoughts) to the effect to raise the soul to a higher rank. (Another) by means of educated reason, which is (a principle) for sending the outer movements within.³⁰ In all places the highest in rank and the best thing for man is innate intelligence ; and for him who is inferior in innate intelligence the best thing in the second grade is learning.³¹ Innate intelligence expresses outwardly the intuitions of man ; acquired intelligence communicates to the interior the impressions from the outside world.³² *Hosh* means practical good sense and *vir* is reason. Nobody can buy these at any price. It may be here remarked that knowledge as an essential factor in a virtuous life received due emphasis : thus it is said that the first strength is the strength of wisdom.³³ Again, "Be it known that all good qualities exist because of the heavenly principle of wisdom."³⁴ Virtue, however, requires not merely knowledge, but-

³⁰ Dk. I. 60.

³² Dk. I. 60.

³⁴ Dk. II. 83.

³¹ Dk. III. 134.

³³ Dk. VII. 475.

also practice. "Education makes man noble ; good habits endow him with a virtuous disposition ; education is a corrector of man, good habits the guardian of his soul."³⁵

A faculty corresponding to the modern word conscience was recognised. It was called *Vaksh* i. e. the power that guides man in the right path. And the invisible power that is in the soul, to help it and to make it behave properly in this world is the conscience that gives warnings to walk in the good path.³⁶ "The soul and the *farohar* are because of conscience ; and it is also owing to conscience that the soul and *farohar* perceive ; and conscience is the eye (of souls and *farohars*). ... And the soul performs the work relating to (its) wishes and the *farohar* prevails in the vigour of its own, through conscience."³⁷ The presence of conscience means power of perceiving the right thing. The power of doing the right thing implies freedom of will. "God has given to all men sufficient ability to save themselves from sin as well as from Ahriman the source of their sins and woes."³⁸ In the *Avesta*, man is called 'lord of the corpor-

³⁵ Gs. 11.

³⁷ Dk. III. 165.

³⁶ Dk. III. 164.

³⁸ Dk. VII. 441.

eal world.' Man has the power of governing himself, the power denied to other creatures. This capacity, vouchsafed as a distinctive gift to all human beings, of initiating either good or evil actions, at one's own will, creates in man a sense of moral responsibility. In our view thus alone ethics becomes possible.

This brief sketch of the psychological ideas known to the Zoroastrian writers shows that it is not possible to find in them very exact classifications of human faculties. Though we encounter many lists of human faculties, there is a considerable diversity in these. The classifications are not based on fixed logical principles of division. The terms employed also have not always the same definite meaning. Further, no very exact line of demarcation is drawn between the bodily and the mental faculties. We look in vain for the recognition of the tripartite division of the mind into reason, feeling and volition. There is no marked metaphysical or psychological dualism in a man's soul, corresponding to the modified metaphysical and ethical dualism of the later Zoroastrian philosophy. Nevertheless, substantial steps were taken in psychology,

when the broad division between the material and the non-material parts of the human whole was made; when attempts were made to differentiate different faculties; and above all, when it was recognised that man's will is free. And with such a psychological conception of man the moral ideal was possible.

PART II

CHAPTER IV

THE GENERAL MORAL ATTITUDE

First an attempt will be made to give a general idea of the moral attitude of the Parsi faith and of its characteristic principles. A clear grasp of the fundamental standpoint of Zoroastrianism will enable us to survey the details with greater facility.

The view here taken of life shows a remarkable absence of the recognition of the deeper metaphysical problems related with ethical problems. The Hindu mind misses anything really corresponding to the mysterious concepts like *Maya*, *Karma*, *Samsara*, *Moksha*, which play so important a part in Hindu speculation. Concerned predominantly with practical morality this religion is known above all as an ethical religion. The main interest generally centres round the ethical implication of

questions rather than their deep philosophy. This indicates at once the strength and weakness of the whole system.

The first consequence which directly flows from this predominantly unmetaphysical character of the system is the positive view taken of life. The utilitarian genius of the Iranians instinctively avoided all attempts to adumbrate pure abstractions and thus evolved a view which is essentially practical. There is no mysticism, no attempt to fathom the deeper and darker shadows of life, no flight to clutch at the transcendental. Dr. Dhalla says:¹ "Religion should be such that its ideals can be applied to our work-a-day world. Its teachings should be applicable to the exigencies of daily life..... This is the characteristic of Zoroastrianism through its very simplicity."¹ The reality of immediate experience is not questioned for a moment : it is always supremely real. The finite is not sacrificed on the altar of the infinite. The finite is made of the same stuff that constitutes the infinite : the infinite is the deepening, the expansion of the finite, not quite different from or opposed to it.

¹ Dr. Dhalla. p. 358-9.

Two features which follow from this attitude may be observed at once. The one is the firm belief in the reality of the individual soul, and in its capacity for activity. The individual's contribution to the sum total of the good of the world receives special recognition in Zoroastrian ethics. Man is held to be largely a free-willed being, capable of initiating both good and evil activities and according as he leans more on the one side or the other, the fate of the universe is decided for good or evil. Man is thus far from being a mere wheel in a universal machinery, a helpless tool in the hands of powers vaster and superior to himself. He has a choice to make, a choice pregnant with infinite possibilities both to himself and to others; he has a part to play, a part which helps to turn this way or that way the tide of success of the moral forces of the universe. Constant faith in the power of man, genuine respect for his individual efforts, and persistent insistence on his activity in the right directions give to the whole view a tone of vigour and make it a very powerful lever to uplift the masses from passivity and indolence.

X Another feature which is the outcome of this positive view is the optimistic tone prevailing about man's destiny. A belief in the reality of immediate experience inspires confidence in its possibilities. This may be contrasted with the fatalistic view which resigns us to the irresistible operations of destiny and so often breeds a pessimistic outlook. In the view taken of the worth and importance of the individual little room is left for dark or mysterious views about man's future. Man is very much the master of his fate. He is not a negligible factor in the constitution of the universe. This inspires him with a sense of power, a consciousness of dignity, which make light the difficulties of the situation and fill his mind with bright hopes about the future. Darmesteter says:—"The Zoroastrian religion was a religion of life in the noblest sense of the word; it brought two things of which the old Aryan religions in the midst of which it arose had no idea or only a dim perception; those two things were *morality* and *hope*; so that the Zoroastrian faith not only gives its follower a moral rule through life; not only directs his heart, his tongue, his

hand, teaching him *good thought, good word, good deed*; but it tells him that the good will prevail at last if he does his duty; that a son of the prophet, Saoshyant, will come and open the eternal reign of Ormazd and exterminate the evil from the world. The poorest, the meanest Zoroastrian in the world knows that he is born a soldier of Saoshyant and that Ormazd will conquer through him.”² Every Zoroastrian necessarily believes in the ultimate triumph of the good, although his optimism is not of a facile type, but largely based upon man’s efforts or sufferings as direct contributions towards the realization of the future millennium. Like Tennyson he believes that ‘good will be the final goal of ill’ and that

“Good shall fall
At last—far off—at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.”

The system is the outcome of the robust, irrepressible optimism of the Iranian mind. It can be broadly distinguished from the views of certain thinkers, chiefly Eastern, who have considered life as radically and unalterably evil and then desire its extinction. The Iranian

² ERE IX. 647.

life is filled with bright hopes both for life here and hereafter, and salvation or *Moksha* is considered as consisting not in the negation of life, but in its fullest realization.

As Zoroastrian metaphysics posits two spirits, Spenta Mainyu the Good spirit, and Angra Mainyu the Evil spirit, so also Zoroastrian ethics evolves the fundamental opposition between the Good and the Evil, the forces of Life and the forces of Death. The whole universe is arrayed in two opposite camps ready to thrust each other out. The duty of man consists in enlisting himself on the side of the good, by furthering to the best of his ability all the vital forces and retarding all the forces of death.

Ahura says to the wicked one ; "Neither our minds are in harmony, nor our precepts, nor our comprehensions, nor our beliefs, nor our words, nor our actions, nor our consciences, nor our souls."³ In the *Arda Viraf* and other Pahlavi writings, the distinction is sharply maintained. The first footstep is the good thought, the second is good word, and the third is good deed.⁴ The practice of evil thoughts, evil words, and evil deeds is

³ Ys. XIX. 15.

⁴ AV. 154, 189.

punished.⁵ A man should prefer "good to harm, good deeds to sins, virtue to vice, light to darkness."⁶ "Let all your thoughts, my son, be about good and let no evil idea possess your mind; for man's life is not eternal."⁷ A man "should maintain himself by good thoughts, good words, good tongue, and good deeds."⁸ He "who thinks good thoughts, speaks good words, and does good deeds, does by his good thoughts and words and deeds cause his soul to reach the best place."⁹ It is said in the *Menuk-i-khrat* that when the soul of a righteous man passes over the bridge, his own deeds of a virtuous kind come to meet him in the form of a handsome maiden. She says: "I am no maiden, but I am thy virtuous deeds, thou youth, who art well-thinking, well-speaking, well-doing, and of good religion."¹⁰ In the same way to a wicked man, after his death, his evil deeds come in the form of a maiden, and the maiden says: "I am thy deeds, thou monster, who art evil-thinking, evil-speaking, evil-doing and of evil religion."¹¹ Holiness is acquired through good thoughts,

⁵ AV. 190. ⁷ An At M 1. ⁹ Gs. 32. ¹¹ Mkh. 23.

⁶ Gs. 21. ⁸ Gs. 22. ¹⁰ Mkh. 19.

good words and good deeds.¹² But "the soul of him who follows evil professions becomes guilty through evil thoughts evil words and evil deeds."¹³ "And the evil thoughts are the cause of danger and the increasers of evil passions."¹⁴ "Evil passions are owing to evil, mean and extremely hurtful."¹⁵

The oft-repeated reference to thoughts, words and deeds, suggests at once the comprehensiveness and depth of the ethical position of these writings. For the root of good or bad words or deeds is to be found in good or bad thoughts. The basis of the ethics may therefore be said to be fundamentally spiritual. But though the inner motive is of primary importance, the outer act or consequence is also recognised as possessing a value which ethics must consider. It may be remarked here that the importance of the triad of thought, word and deed in the Zoroastrian scheme of life is not without its parallels in some other Eastern faiths. In the classical Sanscrit writings, the reference to *manas*, *vach* and *karman* exactly corresponds to Humata or Manashni, Hukhata or Gavashni and Hvar-

¹² Dk. I. 20. ¹⁴ Dk. I. 60.

¹³ Dk. I. 20. ¹⁵ Dk. II. 86.

shta or Kunashni. The eightfold path which Gautama Buddha preached as a way to the extinction of suffering is more or less an expansion of the Zoroastrian formula : Right Faith, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Living, Right Effort, Right Thought, Right Self-concentration. Equally noteworthy is the correspondence which the Zoroastrian triad exhibits with the three jewels of the Jainas. They are *Samyag-darsana*, right conviction, faith and perception combined; *samyag-jnana*, right knowledge; *samyak-charitra*, right conduct.¹⁶

The sum total of duty is expressed by the one word *Asha*, which may in particular terms be translated as Righteousness or Purity. Under the dominating influence of the idea, the whole world-order is to be kept in its purest state, all its better elements advanced towards their promised realisation and its worse elements gradually made to disappear. This is then the broad meaning of *Asha*, the fundamental concept of Parsi ethics.

* The main idea of the Parsi ethics is the fullest realisation of the vital forces and the

¹⁶ J. L. Jaini. Outlines of Jainism 1916—p. 52.

consequent disappearance of the opposite tendencies. In the words of the poet:—

“T’is life whereof our nerves are scant,
Oh life, not death for which we pant,
More life and fuller that I want.”

In the course of the development of the ethics this idea received a richer and fuller content.

In the earliest stages of civilization, when animistic tendencies largely prevail, and abstract ideas are understood only under the guise of something concrete, morality consisted very largely in a struggle against evil spirits. Everything which has a pernicious tendency is supposed to be due to the action of some evil spirit. All such evil spirits must be exorcised. Hence the very great insistence shown on the elaborate rituals calculated to root out all impurity, under the shelter of which an evil spirit generally lurks.

The idea gradually receives a more liberal interpretation. As Lehmann remarks, the religious duties go hand in hand with the work of civilisation. We must remember that in the time of the *Gathas*, the people were mainly pastoral and agricultural. The work

of promoting life took the special forms suited to the age. The work of breeding cattle well and the art of cultivation receive special attention. Many an important work such as building of bridges, houses, canals, the destruction of noxious creatures become highly moral when looked at from this point of view.

The idea of utility underlying the above agricultural ethics received a further extension when man's health and vigour become objects of particular attention. Thus marriage as a regulator of the sexual relations and a guarantee of pure and healthy progeny was highly lauded. All illicit relations, all unnatural intercourse, were strongly condemned inasmuch as they led to the utmost impoverishment of life. Positive obligations were laid upon man to maintain and promote his energy first and then to produce and bring up healthy progeny. The same emphasis upon the constructive elements in ethics is shown by the great contempt expressed for asceticism in each and every form. The ideal of renunciation had no fascination for the intensely practical mind of the Zoroastrians. A state of celibacy such as was at one time popular among ancient

Brahmans and mediaeval Christians did not find favour amongst the followers of Zoroaster. It was the same with reference to fasting. In fact, all negative virtues, which if divorced from more positive and fruitful activities lead to the diminution of life-forces, were either relegated to the background or ignored.

From this general standpoint, it is not strange to find that all practical virtues which lead to success in life receive marked recognition. The qualities of thrift, temperance, industry, moderation are deemed essential for a true Zoroastrian. So far Parsi ethics appear as ethics of utility.

The best spirit of the Zoroastrian moral attitude will be missed if it is supposed that the calculations of worldly profit and loss were what was chiefly dreamt of by the Iranian mind. A vivid appreciation of the higher and finer possibilities of the human soul grew up. A conspicuous place was assigned to altruistic virtues. Charity or good-will, active philanthropy in all its shapes and forms, large-mindedness are part and parcel of a virtuous organization. The followers of Zoroaster learnt well to identify self with the larger

self of the community and to work in a spirit of disinterestedness for the larger brotherhood. A further manifestation of the idealistic tendency of the ethics is seen in the very great regard attached to truthfulness in mind, word and deed. This trait comes out finely in the well-known definition of the Persian ideal given by Herodotus, when he said that to tell the truth and bend the bow were the main part of Persian education.

Such, briefly expressed, is the main attitude of the system of ethics developed by the Zoroastrians. We may conclude in the words of Lehmann—"Reviewing the whole field we note the extremely formal and rather juristic character of the Zoroastrian ethic, while the Persian genius for utilitarianism and things practical always enters into the scheme of righteousness and justice. In the individual life, this ethic appreciated industry, self-control and veracity; in social life, righteousness, regularity and social accord. The reverse of this ethic is an abstract stiffness that will not accommodate itself to life and whose irrational consequences are often inimical to life. The monotonous opposition of good to

evil and evil to good leaves no room for the intermediate stages of real life, for the individual and spontaneous states in the soul of mankind. The Persians cared little for the emotions of disinterestedness; even in the religious feelings we feel too often the want of a lyric element; on the contrary we always feel the heavy burden of the juristic spirit. In accordance with this, ‘religion’ in the *Avesta* is called ‘law’ (*daena*) and the Persians could not distinguish between the two ideas.”¹⁷

CHAPTER V

THE VALUE OF LIFE: INDUSTRY AND INDOLENCE

The essentially positive character of the Zoroastrian ethics is best brought out by its constant and reiterated emphasis on the value of life. Life itself is a very good thing and the longer it is the better. In the *Gathas*, Zarathustra prays "In order that I may make known to men the true and sacred aims of their desires, grant Ye me a long life for this."¹ Again he says: "And do Thou, O Lord..... bestow a like long-lasting life on us."² Zarathustra spoke to Vistaspa: "I bless thee, O man, O lord of the country, with the living of a good life, of an exalted life, of a long life. May thy men live long! May thy women live long! May sons be born unto thee of thy own body!"³ Life as such is a divine thing; it is

¹ Ys. XLIII. 13. ² Ys. XXVIII. 7. ³ Yt. XXIII. 1.

created by Ahura Mazda; death is always an abomination; it owes its existence to Ahriman.⁴ Ahura Mazda is the lord of the deeds of life,⁵ and the source of all the joys of life.⁶ *Haurvatat* or health and *Ameretat* or immortality are very frequently made objects of prayer. Ahura Mazda gives these as a reward for holy words and deeds.⁷ “We sacrifice unto *Haurvatat*, the Amesha Spenta, we sacrifice unto the prosperity of the seasons.....We sacrifice unto *Ameretat*, the Amesha Spenta.”⁸ The final state of man is pictured as eternal, deathless life. “That will cleave unto the victorious Saoshyant and his helpers, when he shall restore the world, which will (thenceforth) never grow old and never die, never decaying and never rotting, ever living and ever increasing, and master of its wish. When the dead will rise, when life and immortality will come, and the world will be restored at its wish, when the creation shall grow deathless—the prosperous creation of the good spirit,—and the Druj shall perish.”⁹

⁴ Ys. XXX. 4.

⁷ Ys. XXXIV. 1.

⁵ Ys. XXXI. 8.

⁸ Yt. II. 6.

⁶ Ys. XXXIII. 10.

⁹ Yt. XIX. 19-20; 89-90.

Death, disease, decrepitude are all abhorred. Death is the worst of all evils. Before the Holy word, "Sickness fled away, Death fled away, the Daeva fled away."¹⁰ The following boon is asked: "That I may take away both hunger and thirst, from the world created by Mazda; that I may take away both old age and death, from the world created by Mazda."¹¹ "To thee, O Sickness, I say avaunt! To thee, O Death, I say avaunt! To thee, O Pain, I say avaunt! To thee, O Fever, I say avaunt!"¹² All physical imperfection and malformations are considered hateful. "There shall be no hump-backed, none bulged forward there; no impotent, no lunatic, no one with decayed tooth, no leprous to be pent up."¹³

If life itself is so supremely desirable, all things which subserve it are also held in high esteem. "Give me, O Fire, Ahura Mazda's son, a speedy glory, speedy nourishment, and speedy booty, and abundant glory, abundant nourishment, abundant booty, an expanded mind, and nimbleness of tongue for soul and understanding, even an understanding contin-

¹⁰ Yt. III. 7.

¹² Vd. XX. 7.

¹¹ Yt. IX. 10.

¹³ Vd. II. 29.

ually growing in its largeness, and that never wanders, and long enduring virile power.”¹⁴ “In order that our minds may be delighted, and our souls the best, let our bodies be glorified as well.”¹⁵ An intense appreciation is felt for health, strength, prosperity, all things which advance the forces of life. “Give us strength and victory, Give us a great number of male children, praisers (of God) and chiefs in assembly, who smite and are not smitten, who smite at one stroke their enemies, who strike at one stroke their foes, ever in joy and ready to help.”¹⁶ “Mayst thou thyself be rich in cattle, like an Athwyane ! Mayst thou be rich in horses, like Pourusaspa ! Mayst thou have a good share of bliss, like king Husravah ! Mayst thou have strength to reach the Rangha !..... May ten sons be born of thy own body, three as Athravans, three as warriors, three as tillers of the ground ! May one of them be like Gamaspa that he may bless thee with great and ever greater happiness ! Mayst thou be freed from sickness and death like Peshotanu ! Mayst thou have piercing

¹⁴ Ys. LXII. 4. ¹⁶ Ny. III. 10. Yt. XXIV. 6.

¹⁵ Ys. LX, 11.

rays, like Mithra! Mayst thou be warm like the moon! Mayst thou be resplendent, like fire! Mayst thou be long-lived, as long-lived as an old man can be! And when thou hast fulfilled a duration of a thousand years, (mayst thou obtain) the bright, all happy, blissful abode of the holy Ones!”¹⁷ The same spirit of robust invincible optimism breathes through the following passages: “Give me, O Atar, son of Ahura Mazda! lively welfare, lively maintenance, lively living; fulness of welfare, fulness of maintenance, fulness of life.”¹⁸ “We worship Strength and Prosperity and Might and Victory and Glory and Vigour.” “(Give) unto that man brightness and glory, give him health of body, give him sturdiness of body, give him victorious strength of body, give him full welfare of wealth, give him a virtuous offspring, give him long long life, give him the bright, all happy, blissful abode of the holy Ones.”¹⁹ Prayers are directed to the *Fravashis* of the holy persons “for the vigour of health, for the glory, made by Mazda, for the health of the body, for a good virtuous offspring.....for a dominion full of splendour, for a long long life, and for all boons and

¹⁷ Yt. XXIV. 2-5. ¹⁸ Ny. V. 10. ¹⁹ Yt. I. 33.

remedies.”²⁰ Ahura Mazda says: “I made the Aryan Glory, rich in food, rich in flocks, rich in wealth, rich in glory; provided with full store of intelligence, with full store of money, to withstand need and to withstand enemies: It destroys Angra Mainyu, who is all death.”²¹ Here we find an apotheosis of strength, energy, might, victory, glory, worldly power and prosperity and spiritual power and prosperity. It is passages such as these coupled with the optimistic sense of conflict in Zoroastrianism which might have induced Nietzsche to give to his famous book the title of ‘Thus spake Zarathustra.’

Man therefore must not only enhance his own physical and mental vigour, but also equip himself with all the necessary means and qualities instrumental in this struggle for more fulness of existence, both individual and communal. For this end marriage is recommended and children and wealth are recommended. “O Spitama Zarathustra, he who has a wife, is far superior to him who has no wife; he who has a family, is far superior to him who has none; he who possesses riches

²⁰ Yt. XIII. 134, 135.

²¹ Yt. XVIII. 1.

is far above him who has no riches.”²² Thus a life of poverty and celibacy and renunciation is very remote from the Zoroastrian ideal. It is very necessary to take very strong and ample food, for upon that depends not only the vigour of the body, but also all intellectual and spiritual energy. “No one who does not eat has strength to do works of holiness, strength to do works of husbandry, strength to beget children.”²³ “And of the two men, he who fills himself with meat receives in him Vohu Mano much better than he who does not do so; the latter is all but dead; the former is above him by the worth of an Asperena, by the worth of a sheep, by the worth of an ox, by the worth of a man. This man can strive against the onsets of Astovidhotu; he can strive against the well-darted arrow; he can strive against the winter fiend, with thinnest garment on; he can strive against the wicked tyrant and smite him on the head, he can strive against the ungodly fasting Ashemaogha.”²⁴ Hunger and thirst are severe pains and they should not be inflicted on men.²⁵

²² Vd. IV. 47.

²⁴ Vd. IV. 48, 49.

²³ Vd. III. 33.

²⁵ Vd. VII. 70, 71.

This brings us to the importance of work and particularly agricultural labour, because it is with work and activity that prosperity is intimately connected. Zarathustra, like Carlyle, might have said that ‘Work is worship.’ The habit of early rising is applauded. “And then bed-fellows address one another : ‘Rise up, here is the cock calling me up.’ Whichever of the two first gets up shall enter paradise.”²⁶ Upon this fact depends the importance attached to the cock in Parsi literature. A man who gives two Parodar birds (cocks) is just like one who gives a house with a hundred columns.²⁷ Agricultural prosperity forms an essential part of the general prosperity. When it is asked: Which is the second place where the earth feels most happy ? Ahura Mazda answers: “It is the place whereon one of the faithful erects a house with a priest within ; with cattle, with a wife, with children, and good herds within ; and wherein afterwards the cattle continue to thrive, virtue to thrive, fodder to thrive, the dog to thrive, the wife to thrive, the child to thrive, the fire to thrive,

²⁶ Vd. XVIII. 26.

²⁷ Vd. XVIII. 28.

and every blessing of life to thrive.”²⁸ And when it is asked, Which is the third place, where the Earth feels happy? The answer is given: “It is the place where one of the faithful sows most corn, grass, and fruit, O Spitama Zarathustra, where he waters ground that is dry, or drains ground that is too wet.”²⁹ Zarathustra placed the tilling of the soil on a level of equal dignity with such high ethical qualities as veracity and righteousness. Agricultural labour, and all activity furthering human welfare, is essentially virtuous. “Not for the righteous liver, not for the thrifty tiller of the earth, shall there be destruction together with the wicked.”³⁰ To the question: What is the food that feeds the religion of Mazda? Ahura Mazda answers: “It is sowing corn again and again, O Spitama Zarathustra.”³¹ “He who sows corn sows righteousness: he makes the religion of Mazda walk, he suckles the religion of Mazda.”³² The man who abstains from agriculture is a great sinner. “O thou man, who dost not till me with the left arm and the right.....ever shall thou stand at the door of

²⁸ Vd. III. 2—3. ³⁰ Ys. XXIX. 5. ³² Vd. III. 31.

²⁹ Vd. III. 4. ³¹ Vd. III. 30.

those who beg for bread.”³³ “When barley was created, the Daevas started up, when it grew, then fainted the Daevas’ hearts; when the knots came, the Daevas groaned, when the ears came, the Daevas flew away. In that house the Daevas stay wherein wheat perishes. It is as though red hot iron were turned about in their throats, when there is plenty of corn.”³⁴ The earth feels very joyous when there is an abundance of flocks and herds.³⁵ Industry and manufacture are not neglected. Thus there is passage in the *Yashts*.....“we sacrifice unto Khshathra-vairya (excellent power); we sacrifice unto metals.”³⁶

The same respect for life and its necessary accompaniments is expressed in the Pahlavi writings. Women are rewarded, who in the world “honored earth and trees, cattle and sheep, and all the other good creations of Ahura Mazda.”³⁷ The souls of those who killed many noxious creatures in the world; and the prosperity of the waters and sacred fires and fires *in general* and trees and the prosperity of the earth was also increased thereby; and they

³³ Vd. III. 28—29. ³⁵ Vd. III. 5. ³⁷ AV. 162.

³⁴ Vd. III. 32. ³⁶ Yt. II. 2, 7.

were exalted and adorned.³⁸ Good treatment is also given to the souls of men who looked to tillage and cultivation.³⁹ In the ‘*Ganji-Shayigan*’ the same tendencies find expression. A man who gets wealth in this world through God’s favour, “does works that lengthen the lives of men, increase their progeny and prosperity.”⁴⁰ Every man should marry and “continue his progeny in the world and give them the required strength and food.”⁴¹ Attention is drawn to the necessity of looking to bodily comforts. A man should “spend a third portion (of a day) in eating his food, indulging in sports and enjoying rest.”⁴² A man with his surplus wealth should do such works as render the body comfortable.⁴³ Cultivation of land is a necessary duty; a man should cultivate land and make it fertile.⁴⁴ “If you have wealth purchase with it water and arable soil which, if it will not immediately give fruits, will at any rate make a fair beginning.”⁴⁵ Destruction of alien wealth is forbidden.⁴⁶ The land becomes happy when oxen and sheep repose upon it or it is brought from an uncultivated state.

³⁸ AV. 163.

⁴¹ Gs. 21.

⁴⁴ Gs. 21.

³⁹ AV. 164.

⁴² Gs. 21.

⁴⁵ An. Atm. 4.

⁴⁰ Gs. 2.

⁴³ Gs. 6.

⁴⁶ An. Atm. 8.

to a state of cultivation and habitableness or when the burrows of noxious creatures are extirpated.⁴⁷ Three things are recommended in the *Dinkard*: "First, the virtue connected with man's life (or protecting men's lives); secondly, giving pasture to cattle, thirdly giving proper food to the soldiers that they might be in good condition."⁴⁸ "Be it known that the soul works for its immortality by improving the mortal body. The body is kept strong by food.....without food it becomes resourceless and languid."⁴⁹ It is necessary to maintain much respect for agriculturists; it is also necessary to keep trouble and strife far from them.⁵⁰

A reverential tenderness for life is expressed throughout the range of Parsi literature. It extends not only to human beings, but to animals also. A prayer is made to God for the kine that they may have comfort and have fodder "from the famed, and from the humble, from the potent and the weak."⁵¹ "It lies with the faithful to look in the same way after every pregnant female, either two-footed or

⁴⁷ Mkh. 28. ⁴⁸ Dk. VII. 460. ⁵¹ Ys. XXXV. 4.

⁴⁸ Dk. VII. 452. ⁵⁰ Sd. 281.

four-footed, two-footed woman or four-footed bitch."⁵² In the *Arda Viraf*, we find that many punishments are inflicted on those who molest or kill any forms of life. *Arda Viraf* saw the souls of women, whose breasts were placed upon a hot frying-pan. They were "the souls of those women who gave their own infants no milk, but emaciated and destroyed them."⁵³ The souls of the wicked man and woman "who killed the water-otter in the water and smote and slew other creatures of Ahura Mazda"⁵⁴ had to eat excrement. The soul of the man who slew a pious man meets with a cruel death.⁵⁵ The wicked man "who made unlawfully much slaughter of cattle and sheep and other quadrupeds" has his limbs broken and separated.⁵⁶ The souls of wicked persons who gave hard work and insufficient food to beasts suffered severe punishment.⁵⁷ The body of a woman was torn, because she gave people poison and oil of opium to eat.⁵⁸ Animosity should not be entertained towards nor injury done to anything belonging to the good

⁵² Vd. XV. 19.

⁵⁶ AV. 174, 192.

⁵³ AV. 186, 188, 197, 200.

⁵⁷ AV. 194.

⁵⁴ AV. 201.

⁵⁸ AV. 196.

⁵⁵ AV. 170, 184.

creation.⁵⁹ Domestic animals should be kept out of harm's way.⁶⁰ Men should protect defenceless women and children.⁶¹ All useless diminution or sacrifice of life is considered undesirable. "It is a sin.....to strike or to confine a man without cause, to do harm to any female."⁶² Zohak has advised people to be cruel and revengeful and to slaughter men; but Jamshid advises men to lay corn in summer and winter for men and cattle.⁶³ "Abstain from unlawfully (needlessly) slaughtering cows, sheep or goats, that no distrust may happen unto you thereby at the (final reckoning)."⁶⁴ A part of the *Dinkard* is concerned with the excellence of physicians, their merit from doing good, and sin from not doing good; the quality that exists as regards medicines, seeking a physician for animals also, and much else to the same purpose.⁶⁵ The sin of giving no food is one of those which is worthy of death.⁶⁶ In one section there are particulars about the sin, affecting the soul, due to unlawful striking and wounding beasts of burden

⁵⁹ Dk. IX. 643.

⁶³ Dk. VII. 438.

⁶⁶ Dk. IX. 643.

⁶⁴ Dk. V. 315.

⁶¹ Dk. I. 41.

⁶⁵ Dk. Bk. VIII. 48.

⁶² Dk. IX. 631.

⁶⁶ Dk. Bk. VIII. 67.

and cattle.⁶⁷ "One section concerns the mode and object of confinement of a beast of burden, sheep, and dog that are mad and the operation for the affliction ; also to what extent is their restoration ; and when not restored, but come for slaughter, the care of them even in confinement, and whatever is on the same subject."⁶⁸ Laws of eugenics were applied to the animal kingdom. It was a sin to give animals bad males, to admit males to animals at an improper time.⁶⁹ The same general attitude is kept up in the *Sad-dar*. When a person molests or smites any one who is innocent, he commits a sin.⁷⁰ One must keep close watch over one's animals,⁷¹ and refrain from much slaughter of animals and the cattle species. Particularly the lamb, the kid, the ploughing ox, the war horse, the swallow that catches the locust and the cock should not be killed.⁷² The idea is that all useful animals should be spared, while those which affect us injuriously should be done away with. An endeavour should be made to kill noxious creatures and reptiles of the earth. Among these especially the frog

⁶⁷ Dk. Bk. VIII. 84.

⁷⁰ Sd. 361.

⁶⁸ Dk. Bk. VIII. 105.

⁷¹ Sd. 286.

⁶⁹ Dk. Bk. VIII. 139.

⁷² Sd. 295.

in the water, the snake and scorpion, the ant and the mouse should be destroyed.⁷³ A hedgehog should not be destroyed, but put into a hole in the wilderness, where it may destroy many ants and snakes.⁷⁴ Similarly a beaver should not be killed, but put into running water.⁷⁵ But the animal which required particularly good treatment was the dog, because he afforded a very valuable protection to one's property against thieves,⁷⁶ and because he kills thousands of mischievous insects.⁷⁷ Very heavy punishments are inflicted on those who killed or injured a dog.⁷⁸ He who gives bad food to a shepherd's dog "is guilty of the same guilt as though he should serve bad food to a master of a house of the first rank."⁷⁹ Thus the shepherd's dog is of very great importance. It is allowable to kill a sheep for the nourishment of a shepherd's dog, which is deprived of food.⁸⁰ "Every time they eat bread, it is necessary to withhold three morsels from their own bodies and to give *them* to a dog, and it is not desirable to beat a dog."⁸¹

⁷³ Sd. 306.

⁷⁸ Vd. XIII. 4, 7 etc.

⁷⁴ Sd. 318.

⁷⁹ Vd. XIII. 20.

⁷⁵ Sd. 350.

⁸⁰ Dk. Bk. VIII. 83.

⁷⁶ Vd. XIII. 39, 40.

⁸¹ Sd. 292.

⁷⁷ Vd. XIII. 2.

The most remarkable feature of the ethics of Zarathustra is its attitude towards asceticism, which flows directly from its attitude towards life and the world. This characteristic differentiates this faith broadly from many other great religions of the world, particularly from Hinduism. Its character in this matter has already been seen in the emphasis placed upon life and activity, upon worldly goods, upon agricultural and economic goods, upon marriage and the possession of wife and children. It is also seen in the penances prescribed for the violation of religious precepts. Mortifications of body are never in any favour with the Avestan or Pahlavi writers. The destruction of noxious creatures, the construction of useful public works, the assistance rendered in securing good marriages, these are the forms which atonement takes. All forms of abstinence which lead to the diminution of life-forces are rigorously excluded. Thus celibacy continued for a long time is prohibited. Fasting, similarly is unequivocally condemned. In the *Sad Dar* we find the following passages:—"It is requisite to abstain from the keeping of fasts. For, in our religion, it is not proper

that they should not eat every day or anything because it would be a sin not to do so. With us the keeping of fast is this that we keep fast from committing sin with our eyes and tongue and ears and hands and feet.”⁸²

The importance of work and activity is continually emphasized in this literature. In the *Avesta*, the habit of early rising is highly commended. In the subsequent literature, the matter receives a more definite treatment. Diligence in good works is necessary.⁸³ *Arda Viraf* saw the soul of a lazy man, whose whole body was gnawed by a noxious creature; but his right foot was not gnawed. He never did any good work (when he was in this world) except that with his right foot he cast a bundle of grass before a ploughing ox.⁸⁴ The industrious man who assisted mankind aspires to a place in heaven.⁸⁵ A man earns great glory by industry.⁸⁶ Industry is a concomitant of freedom from anxieties and cares.⁸⁷ “Be industrious that you may be able to obtain your wishes.”⁸⁸ “Rise early that you

⁸² Sd. 348.

⁸⁵ Gs. 13.

⁸⁸ An. Atm. 7.

⁸³ AV. 162.

⁸⁶ Gs. 11.

⁸⁴ AV. 175.

⁸⁷ Gs. 18.

may be able to continue your work,"⁸⁹ "Keep up your industry and your fame will be increased thereby."⁹⁰ "He who has acquired wealth by his good industry is by that wealth able to store up virtue."⁹¹ "Practise no sloth; so that the duty and the good work, which it is necessary for thee to do, may not remain undone."⁹² He who is a lazy man is said to be the most unworthy of men. Because it is declared in revelation, that the creator Ahuramazda produced no corn for him who is a lazy man; for a lazy man there must be no giving of anything in gifts and charity; and lodging and entertainment are not to be provided for him. For this reason; because that food which a lazy man eats, he eats through impropriety and injustice; and, on account of his laziness and unjust eating, his body then becomes infamous and the soul wicked.⁹³ In the catalogue of heinous sins, the sin of doing no work, but eating unthankfully and unlawfully is placed twelfth.⁹⁴ In the *Dinkard* much is said about the virtue of honest work. "Whoever is industrious with personal zeal and labour, he

⁸⁹ An. Atm. 7.

⁹¹ An. Atm. 9.

⁹³ Mkh. 53.

⁹⁰ An. Atm. 8.

⁹² Mkh. 10.

⁹⁴ Mkh. 72.

remains fresh in wealth.”⁹⁵ “Be it known that God has created the world for work.....By diligence the work of the Creator is continued.”⁹⁶ “One should pass his life in industry as bidden (by the Dasturan Dastur); one should, as directed by him, irrigate the land, promote the growth of vegetation, and endeavour under his direction, to do the deeds conferring other blessings on the world; one should follow a noble occupation and not a mean one; and one should not be idle.”⁹⁷ From diligence arises skilfulness and ultimately prosperity and power.⁹⁸ “We, men, ought to toil hard for the personal gratification of the pious people and for joy and thanksgiving to God.”⁹⁹ “Idleness should be swept out of the world.”¹⁰⁰ In the *Sad Dar*, persistence in one’s own work and punctuality in its performance are insisted on. Man must be continuously employed on his own work, and then the work becomes his own.¹⁰¹ “Every duty and good work, which it is requisite to perform, they should accomplish while within that day, and not postpone for the morrow.”¹⁰²

⁹⁵ Dk. I. 53. ⁹⁸ Dk. XII. 66. ¹⁰¹ Sd. 259.

⁹⁶ Dk. VII. 495. ⁹⁹ Dk. XI. 12. ¹⁰² Sd. 344.

⁹⁷ Dk. IX. 634. ¹⁰⁰ Dk. XII. 47.

CHAPTER VI

TRUTHFULNESS AND DECEIT: PURITY AND IMPURITY

The virtue of truthfulness was held in great reverence by the ancient Iranians. According to Herodotus to speak the truth and bend the bow constituted the most essential parts of the Iranian education. Love of truth is closely connected with love of purity and light; while falsehood belongs to darkness, to Ahriman.¹ Amongst them (the Persians) says Herodotus, falsehood passes for a most disgraceful act, next to that comes the incurring of debt, and, in truth, notably for the reason that the debtor necessarily is obliged to speak lies in addition.² Herodotus says the ancient Persians had no markets, because these would lead to the practice of deceit.³

¹ Rapp. pp. 313-4. ³ Herodotus I. 153.

² Herodotus I. 138. Cf. J. H. Moulton *Early Zoroastrianism* p. 397.

In the *Avesta*, this virtue is taught most by the constant condemnation of its opposite the ‘lie’ or deceitfulness, ‘*the Druj*’ the ‘demon of the lie.’⁴ *Druj* is the very opposite of *Asha*; it embodies wickedness in all its forms. The epithet *dregvunt* ‘a wicked one’ is derived from *druj*, to denote a wicked man. Mithra stands for truth, and is thus opposed to *druj*. “The ruffian who lies unto Mithra brings death unto the whole country, injuring as much the faithful world, as a hundred evil-doers could do. Break not the contract, O Spitama, neither the one that thou hadst entered into with one of the unfaithful, nor the one that thou hadst entered into with one of the faithful who is one of thy own faith. For Mithra stands for both the faithful and the unfaithful.”⁵ This passage is characteristic because it exemplifies the respect for truth which the Zoroastrians were expected to cherish at all times and in all relations. It was not a local, provincial, tribal or sectarian matter; it held good for man as such. “Unto whom (Mithra) nobody must lie, neither the master of a house, nor the lord of a borough, nor the lord of a town nor the lord of a province.” Otherwise Mithra

⁴ Ys. XXX. 8.⁵ Yt. X. 2.

breaks asunder the house, the borough, the town, the province.⁶ Minor forms which the principle of falsehood takes in life are strongly discountenanced. It is said "Let no one make bold to deny having received (from his neighbour) the ox or garment in his possession."⁷ "Down there the pain for his deed shall be as hard as any in the world : to wit, the deed of men, who knowingly lying" etc.⁸ Honesty in all business transactions is absolutely necessary. "He that does not restore a loan to the man who lent it, steals the thing and robs the man. This he doeth everyday, every night, as long as he keeps in his house his neighbour's property, as though it were his own."⁹ There are six types of contracts ; the word-contract, the hand-contract, the man-contract, and the field-contract. If a man breaks the word-contract, he shall give as damages the amount of the hand-contract. The hand-contract is cancelled by the sheep-contract and so on.¹⁰ And not only the breakers of the contracts, but even his relatives to a certain extent are involved in his crime.¹¹

⁶ Yt X. 17. ⁸ Vd. IV. 54. ¹⁰ Vd. IV. 2-4.

⁷ Vd. IV. 46. ⁹ Vd. IV. 1. ¹¹ Vd. IV. 5-10.

In the *Arda Viraf* rewards were attached to the practice of truthfulness and severe penalties are shown to follow all departure from truth and honesty. The truthful speaker walked in lofty splendour with great glory.¹² "Every one who speaks correct and true, I honour and know."¹³ But the soul of a man "who, in the world, spoke many lies and falsehoods" had his tongue gnawed by a worm.¹⁴ A man was forced to measure dust and ashes with a bushel and gallon and to eat it because when in the world he "kept no true bushel, nor gallon, nor weight, nor measure of length; he mixed water with wine and put dust into grain and sold them to the people at a high price and stole and extorted something from the good."¹⁵ "This is the soul of that wicked man who in the world kept back the wages of labourers, and the shares of partners; and now the soul must suffer severe punishment."¹⁶ The soul of a man was gnawed with worms for having committed perjury and extorted wealth from the good.¹⁷ A man was torn by demons because he "kept back the food of the dogs of

¹² AV. 162. ¹⁴ AV. 176, 199. ¹⁶ AV. 178.

¹³ AV. 203. ¹⁵ AV. 173, 195. ¹⁷ AV. 180.

shepherds and householders.”¹⁸ The same was the case with a man who had “removed the boundary-stones of others, and took them as his own.”¹⁹ The giving of false evidence condemns a man to severe punishment.²⁰ A man was suspended by one leg in the darkness of hell, for a city “was confided to him for administration, and that which was proper to do and order, was not done and not ordered.”²¹ A man’s eyes were scooped out and his tongue cut away, because his “justice, in the world, was false and he took bribes and made false decisions.”²²

Similar emphasis is placed upon truthfulness in the other Pahlavi literature. A man should live according to the principles of truth.²³ “One is supposed to act according to the principles of truth when he behaves truly and sincerely towards his own soul.”²⁴ The assertions of a truthful man can be most relied upon.²⁵ That man is venerable who “fulfils the promises that he has made.”²⁶ “Be consistent in your thoughts so that you command the confidence (of people). Be truthful so as to

¹⁸ AV. 181. ²¹ AV. 189. ²⁴ Gs. 6.

¹⁹ AV. 182. ²² AV. 194. ²⁵ Gs. 18.

²⁰ AV. 184. ²³ Gs. 5. ²⁶ Gs. 31.

be trustworthy.”²⁷ Falsehood is to be subdued by truth.²⁸ “Tell not lies to anybody.”²⁹ Truthfulness is not compatible with hypocrisy or double-dealing. “Do not speak doubly (in other words do not say one thing to one man and another to another).”³⁰ Men are taught by the devil to be hypocritical and to conceal true facts. Honesty is insisted on and theft condemned. “Requite a trustworthy man according to the terms of your contract with him.”³¹ “Take not anything from a thief or give not anything to him but bring him round.”³² “Prevent your hands from stealing.”³³ “Break no kind of promise whatsoever so as to tarnish your good name.”³⁴ “That land is the happier, in which a righteous man, who is true speaking makes his abode.”³⁵ Truthfulness is reckoned the second good work which enables a man to attain heaven.³⁶ Abstinence from falsehood and promise-breaking are respectively the thirtieth and the thirty-first good works.³⁷ A false-hearted man is dubious regarding all things, good or bad.³⁸

²⁷ An Atm. 5. ³¹ An Atm. 5. ³⁵ Mkh. 27.

²⁸ Gs. 26. ³² An Atm. 5. ³⁶ Mkh. 73.

²⁹ An Atm. 3. ³³ An Atm. 8. ³⁷ Mkh. 75.

³⁰ An Atm. 7. ³⁴ An Atm. 8. ³⁸ Mkh. 53.

Truthfulness is on the whole a safe habit. "In keeping oneself untroubled, the discreet speaking which is in the path of truth, is good."³⁹ Fairness in all business transactions is essential. "Do not extort from the wealth of others; so that thine own regular industry may not become unheeded. For it is said that: 'He who eats anything, not from his own regular industry, but from another, is like one who holds a human head in his hand, and eats human brains.'"⁴⁰ "That wealth is better and pleasanter which is collected by honesty, and one consumes and maintains with duties and good works."⁴¹ "Poverty which is through honesty is better than opulence which is from the treasures of others As to him who is opulent, who is a man of much wealth, when the wealth is not produced by honesty, though he takes trouble in duties and good works and righteous gifts, his good work is then not his own, because the good work is his from whom the wealth is abstracted."⁴² So for him who "has acquired wealth by crime, and becomes glad of it thereby, that pleasure is worse

³⁹ Mkh. 13.⁴¹ Mkh. 41.⁴⁰ Mkh. 12.⁴² Mkh. 42.

for him than unhappiness.”⁴³ The sin of misappropriation is the twentieth in point of heinousness, and that of theft is the seventeenth.⁴⁴

We shall meet with a broad and detailed treatment of the virtue of truthfulness in the *Dinkard*. A contradiction between expediency or what appeals to one for the particular moment and truth as something eternal is perceived. The attitude praised is the reverse of casuistry. “If at any place holy men find it very injurious and hurtful (to speak the truth), still it (the truth) must be spoken. And, if at any place, holy men should find untruth very convenient and beneficial, still, it must never, at any time, be spoken.”⁴⁵ “Be it known that the man who is far-sighted.....hopes to be saved from damnation by being in the good graces of the Almighty on account of his perfect veracity, his proper sense of justice, his fidelity to plighted word.”⁴⁶ “A promise or plighted word should not be spoken, nor should obligation be forgotten.”⁴⁷ A definition of truthfulness is given here. “And truth is

⁴³ Mkh. 49. ⁴⁵ Dk. I. 27. ⁴⁷ Dk. IX. 643.

⁴⁴ Mkh. 72. ⁴⁶ Dk. VII. 427.

this : whoso speaks anything speaks what he ought to speak and speaks so with caution as though God and the Amesha-spend stood near behind him listening to his utterance and observing him.”⁴⁸ “The best thing is truth and the worst thing is falsehood.”⁴⁹ “The unity of the essentials (of morality) is this that you should keep (your) thought and word and deed entirely true ; and pious life is this : whoso having cast out the *druj* entirely from (his) body would not allow it to return into the body.”⁵⁰ Nor are we justified to tamper with truth for courtesy’s sake. “One’s own tongue should not be trained to be polite to (serve) falsehood.”⁵¹

From the above quotations it can be clearly inferred that deception or *druj* in all its forms and shapes should be given up. Evil or falsehood is implanted in man by Ahriman or the evil principle. “Harm is done to all people through the deceitfulness of the Deceiver.”⁵² “If you force out falsehood from (your) body, your body will be improved and your soul delivered (from hell).”⁵³ “And all the physical

⁴⁸ Dk. XI. 5. ⁵⁰ Dk. XII. 31. ⁵² Dk. I. 22.

⁴⁹ Dk. XII. 40. ⁵¹ Dk. XII. 59. ⁵³ Dk. I. 53.

danger that originates in the body, does so because of the residence within it of the power of falsehood.”⁵⁴ Giving false evidence⁵⁵ and counterfeit coining are condemned. “Those who promulgate the bad religion cause such evil as is caused by coiners of money by uttering among people lead in place of gold, or by alloying gold with lead.”⁵⁶ All attempts at misappropriation of others’ property are distinctly immoral. “Wealth should not be realized by sinful acts.....because that (wealth) which is (so) obtained.....will be ravaged.”⁵⁷ One is asked to avoid robbery in the following passage which suggests that theft may be committed even in intention. “And robbery is this: whoever speaks about the wealth which is not his own, thus, ‘Would that it were mine.’”⁵⁸ Theft is a ‘capital offence.’⁵⁹ It is grossly dishonest in a priest to take money for performing some ceremonial and then to omit it. “And he who shall take his money, and not perform his ceremonial, is just as though he had abstracted from the angels and the righteous guardian spirits, and destroyed,

⁵⁴ Dk. IV. 239. ⁵⁶ Dk. I. 51. ⁵⁸ Dk. XII. 3.

⁵⁵ Dk. IX. 629. ⁵⁷ Dk. XII. 52. ⁵⁹ Dk. IX. 629.

as much propitiation as would have been possible from that ceremonial.”⁶⁰

The same emphasis on truthfulness continues in later literature. “The possession of truth is the one power of the faithful, through the singleness of truth. The many kinds of falsehood, which must become confused and mutually affecting to many, are in the aggregate, from one source of deceitfulness.”⁶¹ “It is necessary to take early to the speaking of truth and doing of justice and to maintain oneself therein, for nothing whatever is better among mankind than truth.....Owing to truth Hormazd created this world, and that other world and truth has remained on the spot and on account of truth it becomes pure.....One truthful man is better than the whole world speaking falsehood.”⁶² “That any agreement and promise they make with any one it is necessary so far to perform and bring to pass. Although many things may go to harm by means of it, it is not desirable to perform that agreement with duplicity.”⁶³ It is a Mihir-druj (a ‘breach of promise’) and any one who commits it has

⁶⁰ Dd. 243. ⁶² Sd. 323.

⁶¹ Sg. 120. ⁶³ Sd. 287.

the heaven closed for him.⁶⁴ The taint extends even to a man's children. A breach of a covenant between two persons with no witness to it except God is the worst sin.⁶⁵ "It is requisite to abstain strictly from speaking falsehood...and falsehood is the chief of sins."⁶⁶ "A liar is a co-operator with Aharman."⁶⁷ "There is no hereafter for the speakers of falsehood and in the midst of men they are contemptible."⁶⁸ "It is necessary to practise great abstinence from committing theft and seizing anything from mankind by force."⁶⁹ A thief has to lose double the amount of property he has stolen and a robber has to forfeit a fourfold amount of property he has taken. A thief may have his ear cut off and may be beaten; while a robber may be killed.⁷⁰

PURITY AND IMPURITY

It might be said without much fear of contradiction that the virtue most praised is that of purity. A rough definition of what constitutes moral impurity is given in the following sentence : "To render the soul full of blemishes

⁶⁴ Sd. 287. ⁶⁷ Sd. 322. ⁷⁰ Sd. 326-7-8.

⁶⁵ Sd. 288. ⁶⁸ Sd. 322.

⁶⁶ Sd. 322. ⁶⁹ Sd. 326.

there are evil understanding, deceit, injury to purity, apathy, pride, scorn, evil passion, slander, adultery and idleness.”^{70a} Very often this has reference simply to freedom from physical pollution. Elaborate rules are laid down in the *Vendidad*, regarding the purification necessary in case of the places where deaths have occurred, and where a woman has given birth to a child. All the passages relating to physical cleanliness show the great attention paid to sanitation and hygiene in those days. It was clearly recognised that cleanliness is a part of godliness. A woman in her menses, as a woman with child has to remain quite isolated from other persons; ordinary social intercourse and work is forbidden to her; and then after some time she may wash herself and be restored to her normal position.⁷¹ Contact with dead bodies is very dangerous for man. The *druj nasu* (or the infection due to decomposition) rushes upon a man who touches a dead body.^{71a} Such a man should then undergo a process of purification known as Bareshnum. Many other things become unclean through

^{70a} Dk. IV. 233.

⁷¹ Vd. V. 50-59; XVI. 8-12.

^{71a} Vd. VII. 6-7.

this infection; hence these two must be cleansed. Certain things can be well cleansed such as vessels of gold or copper; while vessels of clay or wood cannot be cleansed at all.⁷² Further, such sacred elements as fire and water should not be polluted through contact with impure things such as a dead body.⁷³ The earth must not be rendered unclean and for this reason dead bodies should not be buried nor burnt.⁷⁴ The Earth feels sorest grief at the "place whereon stand most of those *Dakhmas* on which corpses of men are deposited."⁷⁴ Such things as a bone or hair should not be allowed to pollute the earth. The ground whereon dogs or men have died shall lie fallow for a year.⁷⁵ "He who should pull down *Dakhmas* (graves)... his sins in thought, word, and deed are remitted as they would be by a *Patet*."^{75a} The bodies of the dead should be set down "on a place, where they know there are always corpse-eating dogs, and corpse-eating birds."⁷⁶

In the *Arda Viraf*, we find that the breach of the above rules brings with it severe penal-

⁷² Vd. VII. 73-75.

⁷⁵ Vd. VI. 1.

⁷³ Vd. VI. 26-41.

^{75a} Vd. VII. 51.

⁷⁴ Vd. III. 8-9.

⁷⁶ Vd. VIII. 10.

ties after death. Water and fire are to be looked to with care and reverence, because they are instruments of purification.⁷⁷ The woman who threw hairs from her head upon the fire had her body gnawed by noxious creatures.⁷⁸ A man was forced to eat the flesh and refuse of mankind, because he “brought bodily refuse and dead matter to water and fire and his own body and those also of other men; and he was always carrying the dead alone, and was polluted; he also did not wash himself in this occupation.”⁷⁹

The same ideas recur in the later Pahlavi writings. In the *Dinkard*, it is written that “fire, water and the earth should be kept fragrant and air should be kept pure from all noxious substances and things liable to decay, that owing to them men may not suffer from disease and pestilence.”⁸⁰ “People should be admonished to remove to a distance from the house, dirt arising from keeping birds, sheep and goats lest men should be injured thereby.”⁸¹ “One should keep away from the place where there is a dead man or a dead dog.”⁸² The

⁷⁷ AV. 155; 162, 163.

⁸⁰ Dk. I. 42.

⁷⁸ AV. 176.

⁸¹ Dk. VII. 437.

⁷⁹ AV. 177, 178.

⁸² Dk. IX. 648.

intimate dependence of the purification of the soul upon the cleanliness of the body is recognised in the *Epistles of Manushchihir*. "A washing which is not religiously ritualistic is ranked as an operation among the useless ones."⁸³ The extent to which physical purity is insisted upon may be seen from a passage such as the following : "As it is thereby declared that when he whose body is not purified, until they thoroughly wash him, is not able to seek good works by thought, word or deed, and is not able to purify his soul, it is then a matter for the truly wise to seek even for purification of the soul by the purification of the body."⁸⁴ The first thing to be considered in the life of man is purity.⁸⁵ In the *Sad Dar*, the sanctity of fire is highly esteemed. If the fire is not properly maintained "pregnancy becomes scarcer for the women, fewer male children are born, and honour in the vicinity of the king becomes less for the men, and there is no approbation of their words."⁸⁶ All dead matter is a veritable abomination. It is requisite "to demolish

⁸³ EpM. 284.

⁸⁵ EpM. 303.

⁸⁴ EpM. 285.

⁸⁶ Sd. 271.

the habitation, house... and abode, of any one who has eaten dead matter, and to fetch his heart out of his body and it is necessary to scoop out his eyes.”⁸⁷ No corpse is to be hidden beneath the ground.⁸⁸ Such matters of personal cleanliness as washing one’s face, not making water on the feet, and paring of nails are insisted on.⁸⁹ Menstruous women should be avoided. No remnant of her food is of any use. She must remain at a distance of three steps at least from a righteous man. A thing looked at by her loses its lustre.⁹⁰ It is not proper for her to put a bare foot on the ground.⁹¹

Thus purity is to be understood in the most comprehensive sense, including the external and the internal, physical and spiritual; purity of thoughts, words and deeds. In fact, holiness or purity in the spiritual sense is a basic concept in Parsi ethics. The main aim of a good man is to cultivate the spirit of righteousness. “Holiness is for man the highest good. Holiness is happiness.”⁹² “Purity is for man, next to life, the greatest good, that purity, O Zarathustra, that is in the religion of Mazda for

⁸⁷ Sd. 336. ⁸⁹ Sd. 312, 317, 275. ⁹¹ Sd. 333.

⁸⁸ Sd. 294. ⁹⁰ Sd. 302-3. ⁹² Yt. XXIII. 8.

him who cleanses his own self with good thoughts, words, and deeds.”⁹³ “ May all my actions be performed in the Divine Righteousness.”⁹⁴ Holiness is acquired through good thoughts good words and good deeds.⁹⁵ “ Purity has been called the best quality of the soul and by it a man is saved from hell.”⁹⁶

With this exaltation of the idea of holiness, is connected the idea of the intrinsic superiority of the spiritual goods over the goods of the world. One must not suppose that as the mundane things are highly appreciated by the Avestan and Pahlavi writers, this ethics was merely utilitarian in the narrow sense of the term. Far from running down the higher spiritual qualities of men, Zarathustra evidently places the utmost possible emphasis upon these. And the proper sense of proportion was observed in estimating the relative value of the material things and the higher virtues of man. Thus in a passage in the *Haptan Yast* we find:—“ We sacrifice unto Khshathra-Vairyā (excellent power); we sacrifice unto the metals; we sacrifice unto Mercy and Charity.”⁹⁷ It is here clearly

⁹³ Vd. V. 21. ⁹⁵ Dk. I. 20. ⁹⁷ Yt. II. 2 & 7.

⁹⁴ Ys. XXVIII. 2. ⁹⁶ Dk. VII. 454.

indicated that worship of brutal force is not the sole thing to be desired by us; it is not to be divorced from such spiritual virtues as mercy and charity. This conclusion can be amply confirmed by a survey of other writings. Thus in one of the fragments, we find the following passage: "To obtain the treasures of the material world.....forego not the world of the spirit. For he who.....to obtain the treasures of the material world destroyeth the world of the spirit.....shall possess.....neither the Celestial Light nor the Paradise of me Ahura Mazda."⁹⁸ "And be ye aware also of this, that cattle are dust, and the horse is dust, and gold and silver are dust, and the body of man is dust; he alone mingles not with the dust who, in the world praises piety, and performs duties and good works."⁹⁹ This passage is very significant as it brings out very forcibly the measureless superiority of moral and spiritual ideals above those of this world. Passages of the type abound in other Pahlavi writings also. "Nay even the kingship of the kings of this world and the wealth that accompanies it will not

⁹⁸ TdFr. 90-93.

⁹⁹ AV. 203.

last ; but the deeds of *frasokereti* (or charity) done by one in his good times will be everlasting and indestructible.”¹⁰⁰ The wealth of the world is “of the same kind as those things, good or bad which one finds in sleep, but which disappear as soon as he awakes from it.”¹⁰¹ Body perishes ; hence it is for their souls that men should do deeds of virtue.¹⁰² A man “must consider this world to be an inn and his body to be the receptacle of his soul and must make good deeds his own.”¹⁰³ “Be not proud of your wealth and goods in this world, for this world’s wealth is like a bird that flies from tree to tree and never has its permanent seat on any.”¹⁰⁴ From this follows the ultimate triumph of virtue over vice. The “ultimate value of virtue is so great and so infinite that it will sink Ghanamino into obscurity and make him miserable.”¹⁰⁵ In the *Menuk-i-khrat*, we encounter many passages which breathe the same spirit. “Thou shouldst not become presumptuous through any happiness of the world ; for the happiness of the world is such like as a cloud that comes on a rainy day,

¹⁰⁰ Gs. 3. ¹⁰² Gs. 30. ¹⁰⁴ An. Atm. 6.

¹⁰¹ Gs. 12. ¹⁰³ Gs. 34. ¹⁰⁵ Gs. 29.

which one does not ward off by any hill. Thou shouldst not be *too* much arranging the world ; for the world-arranging man becomes spirit-destroying. Thou shouldst not become presumptuous through much treasure and wealth ; for in the end it is necessary for thee to leave all. Thou shouldst not become presumptuous through predominance ; for in the end it is necessary for thee to become non-predominant. Thou shouldst not become presumptuous through respect and reverence ; for respectfulness does not assist in the spiritual existence. Thou shouldst not become presumptuous through great connections and race ; for in the end thy trust is on thine own deeds. Thou shouldst not become presumptuous through life ; for death comes upon thee at last.”¹⁰⁶ “In wisdom he is the more unforeseeing who does not provide for the spiritual existence, and attends to the worldly one.”¹⁰⁷ “In heart he is the more seemly who abandons the worldly existence and seizes the spiritual one ; and by his own will accepts righteousness as a yoke.”¹⁰⁸ The spiritual aspect of existence is distinctly recognised and assigned the place of superiority

¹⁰⁶ Mkh. 16, 51, 80. ¹⁰⁷ Mkh. 67. ¹⁰⁸ Mkh. 77.

over the material in the *Sad Dar*. One principle of the religion is “that thou prefer the friendship of the spiritual existence to that of the worldly one, and consider the things of the world as contemptible and those of the spirit precious; on this account the glory of the world is sought with scorn, and do not thou let the spirit escape.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Sd. 329.

CHAPTER VII

THE ETHICS OF SEX RELATIONS

A state of marriage was regarded as highly important by the Iranians, considered even as a sacred duty. Thus Ahura Mazda is represented as saying “The man who has a wife is far above him who lives in continence ; he who keeps a house is far above him who has none ; he who has children is far above the childless man ; he who has riches is far above him who has none.”¹ Hence it was considered a great sin either to allow maidens to grow up unmarried or to prevent their marriage. The worst deed which hostile men commit is when they keep a maiden from marriage and immure her as an unmarried one.² “Every man that has a material body should regard his own marriage as a good work incumbent on him to perform.... And he should promote the marriages of

¹ Vd. IV. 47. ² Yt. XVII. 59.

others."³ Through the marriage tie men become related to each other and live contentedly.⁴ A father is said to incur sin who does not enable a daughter who has attained the capability of having a son to satisfy her menstrual excitement.⁵ Prayers for marriage are common. Maidens offered their prayers for husbands to higher powers.⁶ To give assistance to the co-religionists in securing for them good unions is a very meritorious act. In the *Vendidad*, we find that such acts are considered as atoning for sins.⁷ Hence we find that such philanthropic Parsi organizations as the Parsi Panchayat help the poor Parisis with money for marriage purposes. From the above quotations it may be concluded that marriage was mainly recommended because in the first place, it tended to the increase of population and also because both the sexes found the fulfilment of some of their highest capacities in a married state. The duty of having many children is always laid down. "And I celebrate and complete (my *Yasna*) to those of the women who have many sons and to a prosperous home life, which continues with-

³ Dk. IX. 609. ⁵ Dk. Bk. VIII. 148. ⁷ Vd. XIV. 15.

⁴ Dk. IX. 640. ⁶ Yt. V. 87; XV. 39-41.

out reverse throughout the year.”⁸ Barrenness is deprecated very clearly in the Yasts. “And the great Ashi Vanguhi said: ‘None of those libations will be accepted by me, which are sent to me either by a man whose seed is dried out, or by the courtesan who produces untimely issues; or by young boys or by girls who have known no man.’”⁹ “This is the worst deed that men and tyrants do, namely, when they deprive maids, that have been barren for a long time, of marrying and bringing forth children.”¹⁰ A man should marry and multiply his progeny.¹¹ “One should strive for the increase of progeny by going in to her.”¹² “Frequent repetition of the act of propagating the offspring is an act of great worth.”¹³ A man should endeavour to espouse a wife in his youth and beget a child. And women, in like manner, should have a longing to espouse a husband.¹⁴ Children are deemed necessary for various reasons but particularly for the delegation of one’s functions to some other individual and for securing access to

⁸ Ys. I. 6.

¹¹ Gs. 28.

¹⁴ Sd. 278.

⁹ Yt. XVII. 54.

¹² Dk. IX. 637.

¹⁰ Yt. XVII. 59.

¹³ Dk. IX. 639.

heaven. If a legitimate child is wanting, adoption is recommended. "If there be any one to whom sickness from heaven may occur and there be no provision of a child for him, the creator has commanded him that he should make some one a son of his own, as a friend of his soul and should receive a child, because every duty can be delegated."¹⁵ If he dies, without any son, real or adopted, it is the duty of the priests and relations to appoint an adopted son for him.¹⁶ "If any one has a serving wife and if the acquisition of a male child results from her, it is suitable for adoption by that person."¹⁷

The marriage-age of girls was attained at the age of fifteen.¹⁸ Further evidence of the absence of early marriage may be found in the fact that maidens are often mentioned as praying for suitable husbands.¹⁹ It is confirmed by the words of the ritual, in which the pair are asked to show their consent after "truthful consideration."

It is interesting to note how the match was brought about. Very often the parents or

¹⁵ Sd. 279. ¹⁷ Sd. 316.

¹⁹ Yt. V. 87.

¹⁶ Sd. 280. ¹⁸ Vd. XIV. 15.

the guardians arranged the marriage affair. Women sometimes took the initiative in the matter.²⁰ At present, the two parties often marry with mutual consent. Often negotiations for marriage were made by the friends of both parties.²¹ "If you wish to marry any woman, avail yourself of some choice as your go-between and propose to the woman through him."²²

Let us inquire what considerations were allowed general influence in deciding the choice of the parties. Business motives often prevailed. Sometimes it is not love or sentiment, but practical necessity which dictates marriage by way of atoning for certain transgressions.²³ But as Dr. Geiger points out, a higher idea of marriage as a union based upon mutual love was not altogether lost sight of. The priestly singer addresses the young parties at the time of marriage in these words :—" In piety you shall both seek to win the love of each other, only thus will it lead you to joy."²⁴ In making selection of the wife or husband some special

²⁰ Vd. XV. 9.

²¹ Pand-namak-i-Aturpat-i-Maraspandan XLII.

²² An. Atm. 3. ²³ Vd. XIV. 15. ²⁴ Ys. LIII. 5.

considerations are to be looked to. The virgins offer a prayer to Vayu, saying: "Grant us this, O Vayu, who dost work highly, that we may find a husband, young and beautiful of body, who will treat us well all life long, and give us offspring; a wise, learned, ready-tongued husband."²⁵ "O thou Pouruchista, O thou young daughter, him they will give thee as thy husband who is most devoted to the Good Mind, to Righteousness and to Mazda."²⁶ "Marry your daughter to an intelligent and learned man."²⁷ "He is a delightful husband who is sweet-tongued, gives much happiness, is gain-causing in various ways, is full of resources, highly skilled in the arts, and a giver of other well-known comforts: as also a remover of injurious and hurtful things, fearless of himself, brilliant, and a rejecter of the customs of (other) people."²⁸ Besides these intellectual and moral qualifications, a husband should possess beauty, strength, virility, energy, swiftness, tallness, bright clear eyes, long arms and small heels.^{29, 30} Qualities

²⁵ Yt. XV. 40. ²⁷ An. Atm. 7.

²⁶ Ys. LIII. 3. ²⁸ Dk. II. 101.

²⁹ Yt. XVII. 22; Yt. VIII. 13 and 14; Yt. XIV. 17.

³⁰ Zarathustra and Zarathustrianism in the Avesta.
p. 213.

desired in a wife are mentioned. The quality most essential in a bride was that she must be quite chaste before marriage.³¹ "We offer praise and homage to the house-mistress, holy and guiding aright. We offer praise and homage to the holy woman promoting good thoughts, words and deeds, receiving her instruction well and obedient to her husband....."³² Purity, good birth, a strong body, a beautiful form, a tall stature, a well-shaped breast, a slender waist and such other physical qualities are specially appreciated.³³ "Let your love ever be for a fore-sighted and modest woman and marry such a one alone."³⁴ That wife is the worse with whom it is not possible to live with pleasure.³⁵ "A virtuous wife who is well disposed, is a good helper of enjoyment."³⁶ "Choose a wife who is of character; because that one is good who in the end is more respected."³⁷ "Women are necessarily of these four kinds: good as well as bad; not bad, and good; not good, and bad; and neither good

³¹ Vend. XIV. 15.

³² G. IV. 8, 9.

³³ Visp. II. 7; Yt. V. 127. Yt. XVII. 11, etc.

³⁴ An Atm. 4. ³⁵ Mkh. 69.

³⁶ Mkh. 41. ³⁷ Mkh. 10.

nor bad. From among these any woman who is not bad and is good should be selected to manage household affairs and to give happiness and comfort to the master of the house.”³⁸ A prostitute should not be taken as a wife.³⁹ Other factors such as those of race and faith also entered into the matter. “It is apparent that difference of race cannot secure an advantageous condition to pass life in, connivance at defects, similarity of thoughts, participation in benefits or injuries occasioned to one or the other, and contentedness over what is earned; for some women in spite of the ability of, and (owing to) lack of courage in their husbands, force them to purchase more articles for their use than are necessary and, failing to obtain these from their husbands, domineer over them, to show off their superiority.”⁴⁰ Men should tie the knot of marriage with believers in the religion, so that strength might accrue to them and to the people of their race for deliverance from hell by means of prayers and devotions to God.⁴¹

From the *Avesta* it is evident that woman occupied a position of honour in the system of

³⁸ Dk. II. 77.

⁴⁰ Dk. II. 98.

³⁹ Dk. Bk. IX. 211.

⁴¹ Dk. II. 91.

Iranian life. She was styled *Nmano-pathni* ‘the mistress of the house;’ while her husband was called *Nmano-paiti*, ‘the master of the house.’ She has to perform household work, as the husband performs other duties pertaining to his sphere. She sometimes chooses her husband,⁴² she tries to be equal or superior to her husband in love.⁴³ A wife might manage an estate and perform priestly functions.⁴⁴ Women are entitled both to receive the highest education and impart it. “As man or woman knows really and perfectly anything good, let him or her declare it and put it into practice and teach it unto others who may act according to it.”⁴⁵ The souls and *fravashis* of pious men and women are praised together.⁴⁶ They live together in the next world.⁴⁷ Ahura Mazda is often in the company of female Yazatas.⁴⁸

Husband and wife are to behave respectfully towards each other. The first essential in con-

⁴² Yt. XV. 40.

⁴³ Ys. LIII. 4.

⁴⁴ The Airpatistan Avestan fragments. Quoted in Zarathustra and Zarathustrianism in the Avesta. P. 214.

⁴⁵ Ys. XXXV. 6.

⁴⁶ Ys. XXVI. 7-9; XXXIX. 2; Yt. XIII. 155.

⁴⁷ Vd. IX. 42; Ys. XXXIX. 2.

⁴⁸ Ys. XXXVIII. 1.

jugal life is mutual love. Zarathustra's advice to brides and bridegrooms is: "Let each one cherish the other in righteousness: thus alone unto each shall the home life be happy."⁴⁹ A tender treatment of wives is enjoined upon the husbands. Terrible husbands of evil constitution cause great misery.⁵⁰ Much regard should be had for one's wife and protection should be given her.⁵¹ "One's own wife and aged relations should be kept happy, and must not be allowed to remain without comfort."⁵² "One should be loving to one's wife and guide, but one should not be excessively fond of them."⁵³ "The wife of one's choice (i. e. to whom one is tied by the marriage ceremony) should always be treated with much affection and without the tinge of niggardliness."⁵⁴ Wives in return should be obedient to their husbands and co-operate with them in all good designs. "And we sacrifice to the holy woman, forward in good thoughts and words and deeds, receiving her instructions well, having her husband as her lord."⁵⁵ "And I summon the woman

⁴⁹ Ys. LIII. 5.

⁵⁰ Dk. Bk. XII. 51.

⁵⁵ G. IV. 9.

⁵⁰ Gs. 15.

⁵³ Dk. Bk. XII. 61.

⁵¹ Mkh. 67.

⁵⁴ Dk. IX. 637.

advanced in her holy thoughts, words, and deeds, and well subordinated, whose ruler is her lord.”⁵⁶ Cruel punishments are reserved for disobedient wives. A woman was suspended in the atmosphere because she “scorned her husband and master, and cursed, abused and defied him.”⁵⁷ A woman was forced to eat refuse because in the world, she had eaten much meat concealed from her husband.⁵⁸ Women were thrown head downwards because they had broken promises to their husbands and they had stayed away from their husband, and been never contented and granted no cohabitation.⁵⁹ “These are such as must be personally obedient and do service: the wife unto the husband and the child unto the father and mother.”⁶⁰ Here is a picture of an ideal woman from the Zoroastrian point of view: “The woman who is young, who is properly disposed, who is faithful, who is respected, who is good-natured, who enlivens the house, whose modesty and awe are virtuous, a friend of her own father and elders, husband and guardians, handsome and replete with animation, is

⁵⁶ Visp. III. 4. ⁵⁸ AV. 196. ⁶⁰ Mkh. 78.

⁵⁷ AV. 172, 187. ⁵⁹ AV. 191.

chief over the women who are her own associates.”⁶¹ A wife should be all obedience to her husband. She should fold her arms and say to her husband, “What are thy thoughts, so that I may think them; what is necessary for thee, so that I may speak it; and what is necessary for thee so that I may do it?”⁶²

As the great sanctity of married life was held in such high importance, all violation of it was looked upon with great horror. Ashi Vanguhi wails thrice: first, about the courtesan who destroys her fruit; next, about the courtesan who brings forth a child conceived of a stranger; and for the third time she says: “This is the worst sin that men and tyrants do, namely when they deprive maids, that have been barren for a long time, of marrying and bringing forth children.”⁶³ The Yazata Haoma is entreated to hurl her mace against the harlot of lustful wavering mind.⁶⁴ *Jahi* is the personification of adultery. Ahura Mazda says that what gives Him the greatest pain is the *Jahi*, “who mixes in her the seed of the faithful and the unfaithful, of the worshippers

⁶¹ Mkh. 108.

⁶³ Yt. XVII. 57-60.

⁶² Sd. 320.

⁶⁴ Ys. IX. 32.

of Mazda and the worshippers of the *Daevas*, of the wicked and the righteous.”⁶⁵ The *Jahi* is made to fly away when the world progresses.⁶⁶ “Lead not astray the thought of other wives, for by so doing your own soul will become very sinful.”⁶⁷ In the next world severe punishments will follow infidelity in married life. A woman who had committed adultery was suspended by her breast to hell.⁶⁸ The man who had seduced the wives of others was stung by serpents.⁶⁹ Wicked women who captivated the eyes of the men of God had to eat the blood of their own fingers.⁷⁰ “Thou shouldst be an abstainer from the wives of others; because all these three would become disregarded by thee, alike wealth, alike body and alike soul.”⁷¹ In the *Dinkard* adultery is often spoken of as a sin.⁷² Any connection with a harlot is considered equal in point of heinousness to that with a menstruous woman. But the woman is regarded innocent when the act is committed against her will. “That woman should be considered free and innocent who

⁶⁵ Vd. XVIII. 62.

⁶⁹ AV. 191.

⁶⁶ Vd. XXI. 17.

⁷⁰ AV. 192.

⁶⁷ An Atm. 6.

⁷¹ Mkh. 12.

⁶⁸ AV. 171, 188, 194, 195, 197, 200.

⁷² Dk. IV. 233, 237.

has committed adultery with a stranger but who is proved to have received no aid from other people to save her from the faithless man.”⁷³ The *Dadistan-i-Dinik*, says that Vadak, the mother of Dahak was the first to commit adultery; “and by it all lineage is disturbed, control is put an end to, and without the authority of the husband an intermingling of son with son occurs.”⁷⁴ Adultery is a very heinous sin, worse than theft or spoliation.⁷⁵ A case is reprobated in the *Dinkard* which refers to a sort of bargain in adultery. It is “about the sin of giving a girl for a girl, or other living thing, or of speaking thus: ‘Do thou go in unto my sister or daughter, while I too, will go in unto thine.’”⁷⁶ A father is sinful who harbours a paramour to satisfy the menstrual excitement of a daughter.⁷⁷ Adultery leads to various types of murder such as the death of a child in the woman through the intercourse, its death in the woman through the woman’s swallowing a drug and its murder just after its birth.⁷⁸ Sexual intercourse with

⁷³ Dk. VII. 441.

⁷⁶ Dk. Bk. VIII. 66.

⁷⁴ Dd. 217.

⁷⁷ Dk. Bk. VIII. 66.

⁷⁵ Dd. 228.

⁷⁸ Dd. 229.

an infidel woman is condemned on special grounds. "The committer of the illicit intercourse is as unobservant and grievously sinful as *he* who shall lead his own child from *his* native habits and the good religion into foreign habits and infidelity; as to the sin which that child may commit in childhood *he* is the sinner, and as that which it may commit in manhood *he* is equally sinful with it."⁷⁹ One should abstain from rape on another's wife and from causing a woman to occupy a separate bed from her husband.⁸⁰ One should strictly avoid adultery on this ground "that through everyone who beguiles the wife of another, and commits iniquity with her, that woman becomes, in a moment, unlawful as regards her husband."⁸¹ The wife should crave pardon or death at the death of her husband, in that case.⁸² If a woman who consorts with two strange men "takes a look into a river of water, it will make it diminish, if she take a look at a tree or shrub, the fruit of the trees become scanty, and if she speaks a word with a righteous man it will make the glory of the man diminish.....It is necessary to kill her

⁷⁹ Dd. 229. ⁸⁰ Sd. 305. ⁸¹ Sd. 324. ⁸² Sd. 325.

sooner than a biting serpent and similar creatures and wild beasts, because she is more harmful to my (God's) creatures.”⁸³

Sexual intercourse with a woman in her menses is much condemned. When a man has intercourse with a woman who has the whites or sees the blood, he becomes a Peshotanu.⁸⁴ “Whosoever shall lie in sexual intercourse with a woman who has whites or sees blood, does no better deed than if he should burn the corpse of his own son.”⁸⁵ The man who had an intercourse with a menstruous woman had the impurity of the woman discharged into his jaws.⁸⁶ All unnatural intercourse is severely prohibited. For a man who voluntarily commits ‘unnatural sin,’ there is nothing that can pay, nothing that can atone, nothing that can cleanse from it; it is a trespass for which there is no atonement for ever and ever.⁸⁷ “Of the sins which people commit, the unnatural sin is the most heinous.”⁸⁸ The ninth Fargard, *Yathais*, is about “the devilry, the blighted destiny, the complete pollution, the grievous stench, the

⁸³ Sd. 331. ⁸⁵ Vd. XVI. 17. ⁸⁷ Vd. VIII. 27.

⁸⁴ Vd. XV. 7. ⁸⁶ AV. 170. ⁸⁸ Mkh. 71.

heinous sinfulness, and the annoyance to all spiritual and worldly virtue of the sodomite.”⁸⁹ Another part of the *Dinkard* is concerned about “the vicious desire of the performer and permitter of unnatural intercourse; also their violent lustfulness, heinous practice and corrupt, polluted bodies, blighted in destiny ; great through their destruction of life in the things which they see, and every greatness inevitably provides them a merited death ; as great in sinfulness, as Azi-Dahak, in oppression, as the serpent Srobar, in witchcraft as Tur-i-Bradro-resh, the Karap, in destroying the righteous and as a deceiving apostate in falsehood.”⁹⁰ The grievous sinfulness of wealth acquired through unnatural intercourse is mentioned.⁹¹ It is related in the *Dadistan-i-Dinik* that it was the Viptak who first showed to the males the intercourse of males and the way of destroying the seed.⁹² “It is necessary to practise abstinence from committing or permitting unnatural intercourse. For this is the chief of all sins in religion ; there is no worse sin than this in the good religion, and it is proper to call those who

⁸⁹ Dk. Bk. IX. 185.

⁹¹ Dk. Bk. VIII. 71.

⁹⁰ Dk. Bk. VIII. 111.

⁹² Dd. 218.

commit it worthy of death in reality."⁹³ One should cut off the heads or rip up the bellies of both parties in the act.⁹⁴ "And when they commit the sin with women, it is just the same as that with man."⁹⁵ The sin of defiling four-footed females is also mentioned in the *Dinkard*.⁹⁶ One part of the *Dinkard* is concerned with "the sin of those who have debauched a woman who is pregnant or the wife with a child at the breast."⁹⁷ Penalty is attached to sexual intercourse with a woman who wants washing, with her who is a foreigner or any other of those not authorised for intercourse.⁹⁸

It has been asserted by some European writers that polygamy was once prevalent in Persia. The testimony of the Greeks is quoted to support this view. Thus Herodotus says : "Each one of them marries several legitimate wives and acquires for himself yet several more concubines."⁹⁹ But very definite conclusions cannot be drawn from the religious records themselves. Thus Dr. Geiger thinks that a

⁹³ Sd. 267. ⁹⁵ Sd. 268.

⁹⁷ Dk. Bk. VIII.162.

⁹⁴ Sd. 267. ⁹⁶ Dk. Bk. VIII. 72. ⁹⁸ Dk. Bk. VIII. 100.

⁹⁹ See Rapp. Religion and Customs of the Persians, pp. 298-300 ; Herod. I. 135 ; Strabo, p. 733 etc.

passage in the *Vendidad* III. 3. ("in the house of the righteous, women and children are present in rich abundance") implies the existence of the state of polygamy then. But by wives may be meant sons' wives also. It may be that some rich people contracted marriages with many wives. At any rate there is no such custom now, nor is there any clear indication in the religious records that it was once prevalent.

A problem of special importance in connection with the Iranian marriage, is the question of the *Xvaetvadatha* or 'next of kin marriage.' The quarrel here rages round the meaning of the term. Some western scholars maintain that it once meant the marriage between nearest relations, between parents and children and brothers and sisters. The modern Parsis maintain that it means and it always meant marriage between first cousins. The evidence adduced by the former deserves some examination. In the first place, the foreign writers on Persia have testified to the existence of such a custom in Persia. Secondly, there are unmistakable references to the custom in the Pahlavi writings.

Thus in the 21st Fargard of the *Bako Nask*: "And this, too, that a daughter is given in marriage to a father, even so as a woman to another man, by him who teaches the daughter and the other woman the reverence due unto father and husband." In the *Arda Viraf*, there are some references. The soul of a man who had contracted a next-of-kin marriage was seen in the enjoyment of a splendid position. And the soul of a woman, who violated next-of-kin marriage was attacked by a snake.¹⁰⁰

Arda Viraf had married his seven sisters. The next-of-kin marriage was the second of the seven good works;¹⁰¹ its dissolution is the fourth in point of heinousness among thirty classes of sins.¹⁰² The third book of the *Dinkard* contains a long defence of it. The custom was recommended because it tends to preserve the purity of race, to increase the compatibility of husband and wife, and to increase the affection for children.¹⁰³ Another motive was to prevent perversions of faith.¹⁰⁴ From the

¹⁰⁰ AV. 197. ¹⁰³ Dk. II. 91.

¹⁰¹ Mkh. 26. ¹⁰⁴ Revayat. Tr. West. Vol. XVIII.

¹⁰² Mkh. 71. S. B. E. p. 416-7.

next-of-kin marriage arises complete progress in the world unto the time of the renovation of the universe.¹⁰⁵ Then it is said that such marriages were not uncommon among certain other peoples of the world.

But it is maintained that in the *Avesta*, there are no passages which clearly indicate the nature of the relationship.¹⁰⁶ In the *Vendidad*, it is said that those who carry the dead must afterwards wash the hair and bodies with the urine of cattle or draught oxen, not of men or women, except the two who have performed *Xvaetvadatha*.¹⁰⁷ But from all these passages the nature of the marriage cannot be gathered. As regards the evidence of the foreign authors, it cannot be accepted when it is not in perfect agreement with the Persian writings themselves. The Persian Revayats are clear about the meaning of next-of-kin marriage; it means marriage of first cousins. Louis H. Gray thus summarises the situation :—“ Pure Zoroastrianism never advocated it ; it was practised by non-Zoroastrian Persians ; it was advocated at least during the Sassanian and early Arab

¹⁰⁵ Dd. 225. ¹⁰⁷ Vd. VIII. 13.

¹⁰⁶ Ys. XII. 9 Visp. III. 3. G. IV. 8.

periods by a Magianized priesthood ; it appears to have been a theoretical ideal, prompted by the religious and political situation of the period ; it was constantly resisted (even as an ideal) by a large—and doubtless, ever increasing—body of the faithful ; it has disappeared.”¹⁰⁸

CHAPTER VII

BENEVOLENCE: OTHER VIRTUES AND VICES

Zoroastrianism is a gospel for the poor as well as the rich. Charity is one of the main essentials of moral life as conceived here. Kindly and piously to give unasked to one of the faithful, be it ever so little of one's riches, is well spoken of. "What then is your kingdom, O Mazda? What are your riches, that I may become your own in my actions with the Righteous Order, and (thy) Good Mind to care for your poor (in their suffering.)"¹ He who admonishes one for his good is offering a gift to his religious faith in the love of Ahura Mazda.² Ahura Mazda will give the most prosperous life to him who gives gifts to men.³ A man or a woman, who knows the duty thoroughly should declare it and inculcate it upon those

¹ Ys. XXXIV. 5. ² Ys. XXXIII. 2. ³ Ys. XLVI. 13.

who may perform it as it is.⁴ "Never may I stand as a source of wasting, never as a source of withering to the Mazdayasnian villages, not for the love of body or of life."⁵ The spirit of good-will extends to all good beings of the universe. "We worship the souls; those of the tame animals; those of the wild animals; those of the animals that live in the water; those of the animals that live under the ground; those of the flying ones; those of the running ones; those of the grazing ones."⁶ Thus it is entirely within the comprehensive range of the Zoroastrian sympathy to love and reverence the beings of the animal kingdom. But the range is wider still. "We worship all the waters; we worship all the plants."⁷ "I pray for the joy and comforts of this country. I pray for the health and happiness of you, holy men; I pray for a thousand blessings on him whosoever is good and lives between earth and heaven."⁸ "I pray for the freedom and glory of the entire existence of the holy (man) while I bless it, and I pray for the repression and shame of the entire existence of the wicked."⁹ Thus

⁴ Ys. XXXV. 6. ⁶ Yt. XIII. 74. ⁸ Ys. LXVIII. 15.

⁵ Ys. XII. 3. ⁷ Yt. XIII. 79. ⁹ Ys. VIII. 8.

the whole existence becomes the appropriate sphere for the working of human sympathy. But charity is not mere passive sympathy; it is active helpfulness as well. "If men of the same faith, either friends or brothers come to an agreement together that one may obtain from the other either goods or a wife or knowledge, let him who desires goods have them delivered to him; let him who desires a wife receive and wed her; let him who desires knowledge be taught the holy word."¹⁰ The spirit with which all gifts should be doled out must not be cynical, but joyous. Thus "Woe to him, Spitama Zarathustra, who gives alms when his soul is not joyful over almsgiving; for in alms lies for all the corporeal world the decision for good thoughts, and good words and good deeds."¹¹

Charity is inculcated in all its forms in the Pahlavi literature. Morality is not a mere private individual concern, it refers essentially to others as well as oneself. All relations between man and man are to be regulated by mutual good-will. Virtue requires charity as an essential ingredient.¹² That man is most

¹⁰ Vd. IV. 44. ¹¹ Nr. LXXXIV. (tr. C. Bartholomae

¹² Gs. 5. Altiran, Wörterbuch.)

venerable who stores up acts of charity.¹³ "If you enjoy to any extent the power of wealth, use it in charity."¹⁴ "Be always charitable that you may secure your place in Garothman."¹⁵ The maiden who represents the good deeds of a soul and meets it on the way to heaven, describes its special virtues, among which she mentions alms-giving. "And alms were given by thee to him who came forth from near and him, too, who was from afar."¹⁶ The man who provides lodging accommodation for the sick and secluded and traders is said to arrive in heaven.¹⁷ "He who is very rich should use his superfluous riches in supporting (others) and in other good deeds pertaining to higher relations."¹⁸ "He who at his doors gives to the pious dervishes food and water enough to supply their wants, obtains an excellent thing in return."¹⁹ "A man gets respect and glory among men through charity by which the world becomes easy and happy."²⁰ "An exalted final life is through charity and charity is for an exalted final life."²¹

¹³ Gs. 31. ¹⁶ Mkh. 19. ¹⁹ Dk. VIII. 454.

¹⁴ An Atm. 4. ¹⁷ Mkh. 73. 75. ²⁰ Dk. VII. 468.

¹⁵ An Atm. 6. ¹⁸ Dk. II. 73. ²¹ Dk. VIII. 458.

But it is discriminate charity which is preached here. The right arm of help is not to be extended to the lazy or the improvident or the undeserving. It is the 'faithful' who are constantly referred to as the worthy object of charity. "He who relieves the poor makes Ahura king."²² "And that gift is the more unprofitable which they give to the unworthy."²³ "Those who deserve patronage (i. e. the poor) should be patronised as one's own; and if they are not satisfied with such patronage, then they should be admonished."²⁴ "A way should be opened for the happiness of worthy and excellent people, for the good of the souls of the devout people and (for the relief of) every follower of the good religion, who may be unable to preserve himself against hunger, thirst, and (rigours) of summer and winter."²⁵ "As far as possible one should not partake of food till after feeding the needy."²⁶

The following four quotations are significant because they illustrate the nature of the attitude to be adopted towards people of other religions in matters of charity. "If he who is a dervish

²² Vd. XIX. 2. ²⁴ Dk. VII. 437. ²⁶ Dk. IX. 638.

²³ Mkh. 82. ²⁵ Dk. IX. 638.

(a poor man) be also a man of evil religion or of no honest motive, then, too, anything might be given him as a gift.”²⁷ “People of evil religions, who may be in danger of suffering from hunger, thirst and cold, should be saved from these (hardships).”²⁸ It is the custom to give an infidel who is not a foreigner food, clothing and medicine; but wealth, horses, accoutrements, wine, and land should not be given to foreigners and idolators.²⁹ “Men of the good religion should give something to a man of different religion only in case of extreme necessity, lest it become as a sin.”³⁰ No help should be given to vicious people; which might further their evil designs. “Different things are not to be given as means to the vicious.”³¹

The higher manifestation of charity is love and the co-operation or mutual service born from it. Zarathustra advises the young husband and wife to “love each other through righteousness.”³² “When men love and help one another to the best of their power they derive the greatest pleasure from loving their fellow-men.”³³ This love or good-will shows itself

²⁷ Dk. XII. 11. ³⁰ Sd. 282.

³³ Dk. VIII. 454.

²⁸ Dk. IX. 638. ³¹ Dk. XII. 62.

²⁹ Dd. 197. ³² Ys. LIII. 5.

in different virtues such as liberality or generosity, sympathy, hospitality, peacefulness, patience, good temper, courtesy and disinterestedness. The power of generous persons affords us the greatest comfort.³⁴ In the millennium every one will please (his soul) by (following) the path of generosity.³⁵ "Among doers of deeds speaking of thanks and performance of generosity are good."³⁶ "The two most excellent qualities pertaining to intelligence of a higher order are liberality and love." Charity exhibits itself also as generosity "without miserliness."³⁷ "The heart and conscience of the generous man are warm and such a heart has the light of the holy fire..... The generous man is exalted among men."³⁸ Liberality however should be shown towards the deserving only. "When they provide any munificence or liberality, it is necessary that they provide it for the worthy..... As regards that person who provides any munificence for the unworthy, it is called a vain work and a gift without advantage."³⁹ Liberality shown to the worthy

³⁴ Gs. 18. ³⁶ Mkh. 14. ³⁸ Dk. IX. 555.

³⁵ Gs. 29. ³⁷ Dk. II. 71. ³⁹ Sd. 291.

is spoken of as one of the four principles of the religion of Zarathust.⁴⁰ “For the exercise of liberality is grand, in such manner as it is better and pleasanter, in like manner, for the ground on which a liberal man walks, better for the wind that blows upon a liberal man, better for the horse on which a liberal man sits, better in like manner for the cow and goat that a liberal man eats, and pleasanter for the sun, moon and stars that shine upon a liberal man.”⁴¹ Hormazzd says that He has not been able to find any recompense and happiness that are suitable for a liberal man except a blessing.⁴² Again He says : “ I have created the supreme heaven of heavens for the sake of any of the liberal who provide for the worthy and give them something ; and gloomy hell is for all those persons who give anything to the unworthy.”⁴³

Other qualities which flow naturally from the attitude of good-will are also extolled. He who has sympathy is not averse to human concerns.⁴⁴ Hospitality should be unaccompanied by self-praise.⁴⁵ “He who is hospitable

⁴⁰ Sd. 329.

⁴² Sd. 342.

⁴⁴ Gs. 12.

⁴¹ Sd. 342.

⁴³ Sd. 343.

⁴⁵ Dk. II. 72.

towards the good and entertains (his guests) with what has been given him is regarded as endowed with higher gifts than the (other) good men of his city.”⁴⁶ Some details regarding the forms of hospitality are also given. It is customary for the host to rise from his seat at the approach of a guest.⁴⁷ In the *Arda-Viraf* it is stated that to “give the hungry and thirsty food, is the first thing, and afterwards to make enquiry of him and appoint his task.”⁴⁸ *Menuk-i-Khrat* gives a description setting forth the details of hospitality extended to the soul of the righteous man in paradise. As soon as it enters it, the angels and archangels of every description come to meet him and ask him questions. Ahura Mazda says that no questions should be asked but that he should be seated upon an all-embellished throne.⁴⁹ The *Shah-Namah* says that if the guest was inferior in rank, the host saluted him,⁵⁰ but if the two were equal in rank, the host went to meet his guest.⁵¹ A state of peace and harmony is preferred to one of enmity and discord. “With your elders and friends do you live on

⁴⁶ Dk. VIII. 455. ⁴⁸ AV. 153. ⁵⁰ I. 234 and 257.

⁴⁷ Vd. XIX. 31. ⁴⁹ Mkh. 21. ⁵¹ II. 12 and 58.

terms of peace. Do not submit to and if it is possible, keep at a distance from all such as nurse feelings of anger and enmity against you.”⁵² He who has the wealth of patience is no fault-finder.⁵³ He who possesses a good disposition is no miser. A good disposition is the habit of speaking courteously and suavely.⁵⁴ “Who should command our greatest affection? He who is extremely courteous, sweet in his speech, and a great respecter of persons.”⁵⁵ A man’s behaviour towards all good men should be excellent.⁵⁶ A man will acquire friends by his courtesy, at the time of the millennium.⁵⁷ “Whenever you have anything to do or speak to anybody let your deed or speech be sweet and civil.”⁵⁸

A broad interest in our fellow-brethren and an active desire to do good to them are prominent in the Pahlavi writings. A person gains a bad reputation, who deems actions injurious to human interests to be more just (than others).⁵⁹ A man should be most anxious to do disinterested good to his fellow-

⁵² An Atm. 1. ⁵⁵ Gs. 17. ⁵⁸ An Atm. 6.

⁵³ Gs. 11. ⁵⁶ Gs. 23. ⁵⁹ Gs. 16.

⁵⁴ Gs. 10. ⁵⁷ Gs. 29.

brethren. The wishing of happiness for every one is classed as the sixth among the works which are great and good ; and a kind regard for the good is classed as the seventh among these works.⁶⁰ “ He in whose soul virtue dwells is well disposed towards others and desires or is pleased with the happiness of others ; thereby he becomes capable of preventing mutual injuries among men and of promoting the union of virtue among them.”⁶¹ One should give prominence “ to the virtue of benevolence and of taking care of others, so that by this the vice of revengefulness is weakened and the power of the vindictive *druj* is rendered harmless.”⁶² Philanthropists are of three types : first, those who are philanthropists through the love of religious reward ; secondly, those who are so through pure love ; lastly, there are those who do good to others who are known to them.⁶³ “ A man’s body is protected in this world by philanthropy.”⁶⁴ “ One should have regard and affection for (people of) one’s community, and should visit them, and live with them, in one abode.”⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Mkh. 27. ⁶² Dk. VII. 446. ⁶⁴ Dk. VII. 453.

⁶¹ Dk. V. 276. ⁶³ Dk. VII. 453. ⁶⁵ Dk. IX. 642.

"To make an enemy a friend ; to make a wicked man holy ; to make an ill-formed man wise"⁶⁶ are amongst the greatest functions of men. One should be reverent to one's great ones and patronize one's inferiors and should give benefit to one's co-adjutors.⁶⁷ One obligation of man towards the world is helpfulness, and to keep his door open so that he and his fellows might associate with one another.⁶⁸ We have the negative form of the Golden Rule : "That nature only is good when it shall not do unto another whatever is not good for its own self."⁶⁹

The absence of these good qualities implies as much mischief as their presence implies good, and this expresses itself in various forms, such as avarice, anger, jealousy, slander, enmity, selfishness, hatred, revenge, stubbornness, pride. Although things of this world have a value of their own, they can easily become a ground for the sin of covetousness. "The attributes of avarice make men quite discontented,"⁷⁰ and cause them to seek

⁶⁶ Dk. XII. 31.

⁶⁹ Dd. 271 ; AnAtm. 1.

⁶⁷ Dk. Bk. VI. Vol. X. 14. ⁷⁰ Gs. 7.

⁶⁸ Dk. Vol. XI. 7.

shadowy good. Avaricious people are represented as severely punished. The soul of a man was stretched upon a rock, because he had “collected much wealth and he consumed it not himself, and neither gave it, nor allowed a share to the good ; but kept it in store.”⁷¹ The souls of some persons were thrown headlong into hell, because these “in the world, gave no place, nor caravanserai for travellers, nor lodging, nor space, nor baking oven.”⁷² “Form no covetous desire ; so that the demon of greediness may not deceive thee, and the treasure of the world may not be tasteless to thee, and that of the spirit unperceived.”⁷³ “There are two most evil vices pertaining to a perverse intelligence of a lower order.....miserliness and animosity.”⁷⁴ “Whosoever is liberal is praiseworthy and whosoever is niggardly is despicable.”⁷⁵ “One should not be immoderately covetous as regards power and wealth.”⁷⁶ “The heart and conscience which are the abodes of avarice, are cold as ice, and it is the meanness and the coldness (of

⁷¹ AV. 174; 198.

⁷⁴ Dk. IV. 198.

⁷² AV. 200.

⁷⁵ Dk. V. 331.

⁷³ Mkh. 10.

⁷⁶ Dk. XII. 56.

the man) which show him to be avaricious.”⁷⁷ One ought not to be excessively desirous of good things.⁷⁸ “From greediness arises corruption and from corruption perplexity and evil heart.”⁷⁹ “That man has the worst desires, who thinks it right to amass the riches of this world.”⁸⁰ If one sets his heart on obtaining material wealth, he cannot obtain reverence and honour.⁸¹ Anger makes man ungrateful and gives him strength to do evil deeds.⁸² A man should subdue anger by the spirit of endurance.⁸³ The suppression of wrath is one of the ways of arriving in heaven.⁸⁴ “In power he is the more seemly who, when he indulges his wrath, is able to allay the wrath, and not commit sin and gratify himself.”⁸⁵ Jealousy creates in man the desire of destroying another’s happy condition and teaches him to entertain vicious hopes about others.⁸⁶ A man should subdue jealousy by good intentions.⁸⁷ Slander makes men unworthy.⁸⁸ That man is most odious who is a proud tormentor, fault-finder and a bitter slanderer of men.⁸⁹

⁷⁷ Dk. IX. 555. ⁸² Gs. 8. ⁸⁶ Gs. 8.

⁷⁸ Dk. XII. 62. ⁸³ Gs. 26. ⁸⁷ Gs. 26.

⁷⁹ Dk. XII. 69. ⁸⁴ Mkh. 75. ⁸⁸ Gs. 8.

⁸⁰ Dk. III. 129. ⁸⁵ Mkh. 77. ⁸⁹ Gs. 17.

⁸¹ Dk. VII. 492.

Arda-Viraf found that those, who, in the world had committed slander and embroiled people together, had their tongues put out.⁹⁰ Committing slander is a very heinous sin.⁹¹ "Commit no slander, so that infamy and wickedness may not happen unto thee. For it is said that slander is more grievous than witchcraft; and in hell the rush of every fiend is to the front, but the rush of the fiend of slander, on account of the grievous sinfulness is to the rear."⁹² Slander is one of the vices which render the soul full of blemishes.⁹³ A man should abstain from slander, the sin of which "does not depart through the performance of duties and good works, so long as he does not make his antagonist satisfied."⁹⁴ Slander is said to be the greatest of sins.⁹⁵ "Every one who indulges in slander about any one is like him who has eaten dead matter."⁹⁶ The sin of pride was created by Angra Mainyu.⁹⁷ Zarathustra abjures "the evil mind," and all disobedience, arrogance and falsehood.⁹⁸ "Commit no sin from stubbornness or shame."⁹⁹ "Be

⁹⁰ AV, 189, 174, 178. ⁹³ Dk. IV, 233. ⁹⁶ Vd. I, 11.

⁹¹ Mkh. 73.

⁹⁴ Sd. 306.

⁹⁷ Ys. XXXIII, 6.

⁹² Mkh. 9.

⁹⁵ Sd. 356.

⁹⁸ An Atm. 7.

not proud of and indifferent to every person and every thing.”⁹⁹ Hatred, discord, revengefulness are deprecated. A man should subdue enmity by peace.¹⁰⁰ Enmity makes men terrible and cruel.¹⁰¹ A man should not in his palmy days hate anybody.¹⁰² Harbour no revenge against and do no wrong to any man.¹⁰³ Revenge, oppression and tyranny denote want of charity.¹⁰⁴ To oppose revenge patience is necessary.¹⁰⁵ The thought of rendering man unhappy increases through revenge.¹⁰⁶

MINOR VIRTUES

We will now deal with other virtues and vices which receive less elaborate treatment in the Zoroastrian writings than those already mentioned. The reverence for authority, especially of the sacred beings, of priests and of elders, is inculcated. Much stress, therefore, is laid on the virtue of obedience. It means that all rightly constituted persons must strive to be in harmony with the dictates of the divine mind, and in due subordination to the wishes of all having claims upon their reverence.

⁹⁹ An. Atm. 5.

¹⁰³ An. Atm. 4.

¹⁰⁰ Gs. 26.

¹⁰⁴ Dk. III. 140.

¹⁰¹ Gs. 8.

¹⁰⁵ Dk. II. 81.

¹⁰² Gs. 27.

¹⁰⁶ Dk. VII. 446.

and regard. Obedience is referred to in the highest terms in the *Gathas*, being said to constitute the way to the most beneficent Ahura Mazda.¹ Along with the Good Mind it enables us to draw near to God.² Sraosha is an angel of obedience. Disobedience or opposition to the will of God is strongly condemned.³ In the Pahlavi writings this virtue is strongly upheld. In the other world, the women, who practise reverence and obedience to their husbands and lords will be quite well off.⁴ Several persons had their chests plunged in mud and stench, because they “distressed their father and mother, in the world.”⁵ The souls of those who had been disobedient unto their rulers in the world were likewise punished.⁶ Obedience is emphasized as a necessary part of a virtuous man in the *Ganj-i Shayigan* and *Andarz-i Atarpat-i Maraspand*. A man should not do any wrong either to his parents or to his masters.⁷ Children of good behaviour and wives who abide by the wishes of their husbands, afford the greatest delight

¹ Ys. XXVIII. 6. ⁴ AV. 162. ⁷ Gs. 27.

² Ys. XLIV. 16. ⁵ AV. 188.

³ Ys. XXXIII. 6. ⁶ AV. 202.

in this world.⁸ Obedience to the orders of parents and preceptors is the most honourable thing.⁹ "Treat your father and mother with respect, listen to their words, and act up to their orders."¹⁰ "Love your master and superior and do not be careless (towards him)."¹¹ "Have respect for the chief man (of your religion and community). Consider him your head and accept his words."¹² Obedience to all who merit it is highly praised in the *Dinkard*. To obtain deliverance a man must live in accordance with the wishes of Ahura Mazda.¹³ "The final life is (obtained) through ready and willing obedience to God and ready and willing obedience to God is for final life."¹⁴ Meritorious deeds are in one passage described as : "obtaining the favour of the master, that is the employer under whose orders one works, obedience to the master, submissiveness to the ruler, behaving respectfully towards everyone....."¹⁵ "And it is the duty of the child to be obedient and respectful towards its father and to secure his love and keep him pleased."¹⁶ "Be it known that among

⁸ Gs. 14. ¹¹ An Atm. 1. ¹⁴ Dk. V. 458.

⁹ Gs. 19. ¹² An Atm. 4. ¹⁵ Dk. IX. 629.

¹⁰ An Atm. 7. ¹³ Dk. I. 51. ¹⁶ Dk. IV. 263.

the deeds of men, the deed that is highly beneficial to the world is the remaining in submission to one's meritorious masters and just kings.”¹⁷ “The disciple should acknowledge the habits (or follow in the footsteps) of his worthy teacher.”¹⁸ The man who has become liable to *Margarjan* punishment (a sin or crime the wages of which is death) by disobeying the commands of his masters or lords, is saved by obtaining his master's forgiveness for sin.¹⁹ “It is not desirable to distress one's priest, father, or mother; and if people receive much trouble, disquietude, and harm arising from them, it is certainly not desirable that they should give them back a reply with an aggravation. Because their satisfaction is connected with the satisfaction of the sacred being.”²⁰ One should therefore say always in the presence of these persons: “What is your will? So that I may think and speak and do it.”²¹ Obedience should be shown to the commands of the high priests; and every duty that people perform they should perform by their authority. “For it is declared in the good

¹⁷ Dk. I. 9.

¹⁹ Dk. V. 271.

²¹ Sd. 302.

¹⁸ Dk. V. 283.

²⁰ Sd. 301.

religion that if they accomplish as many good works as the leaves of the trees, or the sand-grains of the desert, or the drops of rain, which they do not perform by command of the high priests, or to their satisfaction, no merit whatever attains to their souls, and, for the good works they have done they obtain sin as a recompense.”²² “As two wisdoms are more than one, it therefore makes it expedient to enquire of the high priests.”²³ “When man becomes fifteen years of age it is necessary that he should take one of the angels as his own protection, one of the wise as his own sage, and one of the high priests.....as his own high priest.”²⁴ In every matter that comes forward, one should enquire of the wise and relations, so as to have their advice, and not transact any business according to one’s own idea and opinion.²⁵

Frequent references to humility are found in the *Dinkard*. To oppose anger man needs meekness.²⁶ “A man improves himself by humility when he rises in rank by his wealth and good deeds.”²⁷ “One should not be

²² Sd. 266. ²⁴ Sd. 289. ²⁶ Dk. II. 81.

²³ Sd. 290. ²⁵ Sd. 349. ²⁷ Dk. VII. 447.

elated with sovereignty and power; because verily his good altogether recedes.”²⁸ A man should conduct himself in such a way that he may regard mankind as the best of creatures, and not in such a way that he may think himself to be the best; because verily in the towns he will be regarded as an arrogant man and people will be exceedingly vexed with him.²⁹ “From humility arises the recognition of God and from the recognition of God spiritual belief.”³⁰ But from overbearingness arises violent speaking and ultimately a man loses his reputation. “The man who always has such an opinion of his own wisdom and good qualities that (he believes) he is intelligent and another is not; that he is superior to another, and the other is inferior to him,—such a man deforms and weakens his soul with these two vices (pride and contempt of others).”³¹ He who is arrogant is fit to be contemptible.³²

A feeling of healthy contentment is deemed necessary for a good life. That act of charity is good which is done with the wealth of

²⁸ Dk. XII. 53. ³⁰ Dk. XII. 65. ³² Dk. V. 331.

²⁹ Dk. XII. 62. ³¹ Dk. III. 130.

contentment.³³ He who is the most contented is the least needy.³⁴ A life spent in innocence and wealth of contentment gives us the greatest ease and rest.³⁵ "For things that cannot be obtained (by thee) show no sorrow or grief."³⁶ In the *Dinkard*, this virtue is often referred to. Those who are possessed of the three attributes of contentment, superior rank and industry, without doubt hold relations with the Self-existent, and know the Self-existent.³⁷ To oppose ambition contentment is necessary.³⁸ Contentment is a good quality, when it is free from idleness.³⁹ "If wanting contentment the evil seed of riches of the world and the poverty of the coming world is sown (in man) he becomes perverted of mind and bereft of intellect."⁴⁰ The thought of injuring others is rendered harmless by self-content. Again by increasing the virtue of self-content the vice of greed is removed.⁴¹ "The honest effort accruing from a righteous nature, is the result of appropriate habits of contentment which are devoid of any propensity to ambition, devoid of avarice, anxiety, lust,

³³ Gs. 11. ³⁶ An Atm. 1. ³⁹ Dk. II. 84.

³⁴ Gs. 13. ³⁷ Dk. II. 80. ⁴⁰ Dk. III. 153.

³⁵ Gs. 18. ³⁸ Dk. II. 81. ⁴¹ Dk. VII. 446.

and improved by harmonious tendencies.”⁴² A story is told of two talented priests who were drawing water from a well and supplying it to the work of tillage. They were each given two-thousand jujus by the “mobed of mobeds.” Each of them accepted two jujus, and the rest were sent back with the words: “Give them to some one who is much less provided than we; he might need (them) for much better use.”⁴³ Similarly, “sinful, idle, discontentedness,” is a law-breaking evil quality.⁴⁴ A good illustration is given of moral courage and contentment under misfortune. “Atropat, son of Mahraspend, said thus: “Never has any calamity come upon me which I have not received with six objects of delight therefrom: first that I bless myself that my calamity (is only) this, since worse than that might happen. Secondly, that out of the calamities which have been in store for me one has passed away. Thirdly, that a calamity has happened not to my soul but to my body. Fourthly, that I bless myself that I am a man who is so virtuous that the accursed Aharmān has caused this calamity unto me

⁴² Dk. VI. 424. ⁴³ Dk. XII. 81. ⁴⁴ Dk. II. 84.

owing to my goodness. Fifthly, that every individual evil or calamity that they cause reaches either myself or (my) children; but it comes to me and does not reach my children. Sixthly, that the treasures of Aharman are kept full of calamities for the good, and whatever comes to me (therefore) lessens (by so much) the treasures of Aharman, and he (is) therefore (rendered so much) incapable of doing (wrong) unto another good (man)."⁴⁵

An appreciation of intellectual excellence as a factor in moral life is met with. "We worship the perception; we worship the intellect; we worship the conscience."⁴⁶ "Give me, O Atar, son of Ahura Mazda, . . . knowledge; sagacity; quickness of tongue; (holiness of) soul; a good memory; and then the understanding that goes on growing and the one that is not acquired through learning."⁴⁷ He who has attained immense experience and learning is the most eligible of men.⁴⁸ The companionship of the learned is most advantageous; the acts of the learned are most shining.⁴⁹ That man is the most competent who is the wisest.⁵⁰ From this

⁴⁵ Dk. XII. 35.

⁴⁷ Ny. V. 10.

⁴⁹ Gs. 18.

⁴⁶ Yt. XIII. 74.

⁴⁸ Gs. 14.

⁵⁰ Gs. 7.

importance of learning, education derives much of its value. "Do not refrain from educating your wife and children, your countrymen and yourself."⁵¹ "If you have a son send him to school from his early years, for education is the life-giving eye of man."⁵² All men should try to educate themselves in a religious institution, so that they may be able to pray (to God), to know if they have committed any sins..... and (by thus knowing to keep aloof from them)⁵³ Wisdom is highly extolled. "(Of the benefit which happens to men) wisdom is good; because it is possible to manage the worldly existence through wisdom, and it is possible to provide also the spiritual existence for oneself through the power of wisdom."⁵⁴ He who is perfect in wisdom should be considered rich.⁵⁵ Wisdom is better than wealth of every other kind in the world.⁵⁶ In the *Dinkard*, the foundations of virtue are found to be laid in knowledge and wisdom. "From good knowledge arises good wisdom, and from good wisdom arises good disposition, and from good disposition arises

⁵¹ An Atm. 2.

⁵³ Gs. 25.

⁵⁵ Mkh. 70.

⁵² An Atm. 5.

⁵⁴ Mkh. 7.

⁵⁶ Mkh. 89.

good nature, and from good nature arises righteous action and by righteous action the *druj* will be dispelled from the world.”⁵⁷ “The source of all morality is wise knowledge and of wise knowledge divine wisdom; and God is the originator of divine wisdom in Creation.”⁵⁸ “Education is the life of mankind.”⁵⁹

Many other virtues are referred to. Moderation has full recognition and one is reminded of the golden mean of Aristotle and of maxims of Confucius. Moderation is that which would avoid excess and deficiency.⁶⁰ “The essence of sin is Excess and Deficiency; whereas the essence of virtue is the Mean.”⁶¹ “Everything should be faultless in the mean. And from this Religion, it is thus manifest that virtue is the supreme (Golden) Mean, and the (Golden) Mean is this; good thought, good word, and good deed.”⁶² Every virtue has a tendency to give place to a corresponding vice. This follows from the psychological fact that every man is constituted by a variety of tendencies. “These several goodnesses and

^{57.} Dk. XII. 64. — ^{60.} Dk. XII. 77.

^{58.} Dk. VII. 442. — ^{61.} Dk. Bk. VI. Vol X. 11.

^{59.} Dk. XII. 28. — ^{62.} Dk. Bk. VI. Vol X. 12.

blemishes do not subsist in a particular person and at particular time, but in every person and in every age.”⁶³

Temperance in drinking and eating is upheld as a conspicuous form of moderation. “It is possible for good and bad temper to come to manifestation through wine.”⁶⁴ He who is a good-tempered man, when he drinks wine, is such like as a gold or silver cup which, however much more they burn it, becomes purer and brighter. It also keeps his thoughts, words, and deeds more virtuous; and he becomes gentler and pleasanter unto wife and child, companions and friends, and is more diligent in every duty and good work. And he who is a bad-tempered man, when he drinks wine, thinks and considers himself more than ordinary. He carries on a quarrel with companions, displays insolence, makes ridicule and mockery, and acts arrogantly to a good person. He distresses his own wife and child, slave and servant; and dissipates the joy of the good, “carries off peace, and brings in discord.”⁶⁵ But the moderate drinking is good since “it digests the food, kindles the vital fire, increases

⁶³ Dk. XII. 72.

⁶⁴ Mkh. 46.

⁶⁵ Mkh. 47.

the understanding and intellect, semen and blood, removes vexation and inflames the complexion.”⁶⁶ In the *Dinkard* also this is recognised. “From immoderation arises full heaviness, and from full heaviness unhealthiness and from unhealthiness death.”⁶⁷

Gratitude is a good quality.⁶⁸ One ought not to be ungrateful towards the good spirits and towards mankind.⁶⁹ One should pronounce thanksgiving for the welfare (emanating) from good people, but one should not curse the evil people for the mischief which they work.⁷⁰ “When a person confers a benefit or kindness upon any one it is necessary that the latter should understand the value of it, and lay the obligation upon himself; and, if he be able he should provide a benefit to that amount for that person.”⁷¹ Ingratitude is a great sin; the sinner is akin to Aharman himself and is punished by him.⁷²

A sense of justice is essential. Justice requires that an unworthy man should not take advantage over a worthy man or that a learned

⁶⁶ Mkh. 47.

⁶⁹ Dk. XII. 63.

⁶⁷ Dk. XII. 67; also B. VI. V.

⁷⁰ Dk. XII. 9.

XII. 52. B. VI. V. XII. 49.

⁷¹ Sd. 357.

⁶⁸ Dk. II. 72.

⁷² Sd. 357.

person should not be governed by an unlearned person or a vicious man should not exercise authority over a virtuous man.⁷³ Rashnu is the embodiment of the principle of justice. His administration of justice “renders no favour on any side, neither for the righteous, nor yet the wicked, neither for the lords, nor yet the monarchs. As much as a hair’s breadth it will not turn, and has no partiality; and he who is a lord and monarch it considers equally, in its decision, with him who is the least of mankind.”⁷⁴ “He who keeps his own self to justice and law, will not then practise injury to others for his own benefit; and will not do for others whatever he does not think proper for his own self.”⁷⁵ The same spirit of fairness and impartiality is to be observed towards other religions. “If in other countries there be any writings worth reading, new, ameliorating, good, and divinely inspired, these should be procured.... And whatever in the writings of other nations is unbelievable should not be accepted.”⁷⁶ A section of the *Dinkard* refers to “the advantage from just judges,

⁷³ Gs. 15.

⁷⁵ Dk. XII. 70.

⁷⁴ Mkh. 18. also Dk. Bk. VIII. 73.

⁷⁶ Dk. IX. 605.

and the harm from unjust sentencing and false decisions. So, also, the advantage from truly demanding, truly answering, and assisting the just.⁷⁷ The reason why a righteous man is created better than the stars and moon and sun and fire of Ahura Mazda, and is called in revelation greater and better than the spiritual and worldly creation, lies in his wisdom and justice.⁷⁸

An appreciation of the reign of law and security is found in these writings. All violence is disapproved of: "If a man rise up with a weapon in his hand, it is an Agerepta; if he brandish it, it is an Avaorishta; if he actually smite a man, with malicious after-thought it is an Aredus; upon the fifth Aredus he becomes a Peshotanu."⁷⁹ All attempts at employing brute force are condemned. "Let the wrath demon of rapine be cast down."⁸⁰ Thrift is praised. The thrifty tiller of the soil is on a level with the righteous.⁸¹ Self-control is very desirable. A man should not submit to bodily desires.⁸² That man commands our greatest affection "who well represses his evil passions

⁷⁷ Dk. Bk. VIII. 102.

⁸⁰ Ys. XLVIII. 7.

⁷⁸ Dd. II.

⁸¹ Ys. XXIX. 5.

⁷⁹ Vd. IV. 17.

⁸² Gs. 7.

by his sense of shame, his anger by his powers of endurance, his jealousy by his fear of evil reputation, his avarice by his contentment, and his quarrels by (his sense of) justice.”⁸³ Cheerfulness is a recognized virtue. “Open-mindedness and cheerfulness (are) virtues, whereof the opposite (is) cynicism.”⁸⁴ It is manifest that mournfulness and cynicism should be done away with.⁸⁵ There is a keen insight into the nature of the human mind (as it “makes trouble” for itself by imagination) in the precept: “One should not have worry and sorrow for anything that has not reached him.”⁸⁶ Prudence is mentioned. “Be it known that he is prudent among men who abstains from uttering and committing the sin that has occurred to his mind. And the more prudent (man) is he who abstains from thinking of the sin which has occurred to him in desire. And the most prudent is he who adopts ways and means that his will may refrain from sin.”⁸⁷ Want of decency is considered want of sense. The souls of the persons who “walked without shoes, ran about uncovered, made water on the

⁸³ Gs. 14.

⁸⁵ Dk. XII. 47.

⁸⁷ Dk. VI. 392.

⁸⁴ Dk. XII. 43.

⁸⁶ Dk. XII. 54.

foot" had to suffer severely.⁸⁸ "As far as possible one should not expose (the body);... cold winds and hot winds should be guarded against. And besides this a clean dress, protecting the body, should be put on according to the requirements of one's work or occupation."⁸⁹ Good reputation is always an object of praise. It is the most fragrant thing in the world.⁹⁰ The man "who in both the worlds secureth good name.....is the obtainer of the best recompense."⁹¹ Good company should be cultivated and evil society should be avoided. "He who walks in good society makes it no business of his to injure people."⁹² The society of the good men is the best thing.⁹³ "One should always be diligent in (one's) conference with the good people."⁹⁴ "One should not co-operate nor consort with stupid, selfish and lustful men; since he always comes to disgrace and helplessness who co-operates and enjoys company with stupid, selfish and lustful men."⁹⁵

A life of public usefulness is a duty from which people have no right to shrink. "To

⁸⁸ AV. 172. ⁹¹ Dk. IX. 627. ⁹⁴ Dk. XII. 12.

⁸⁹ Dk. IX. 637. ⁹² Gs. 12. ⁹⁵ Dk. XII. 50.

⁹⁰ Gs. 19. ⁹³ Gs. 17.

those wise men who choose to retire from the post conferred on them by the king, or who, in order that they may live in contentment, give up the business or service which was entrusted to them,—to those that entertain such good notions of securing happiness, no benefit can accrue in life by this relinquishment (of their work)."⁹⁶ For the proper care of public interests, the kings should fulfil the high obligations incumbent upon them. A king should possess certain good qualities. He must be of good religion; he must be a man of good conscience; he must possess forbearance, love of his subjects, cheerfulness of heart, simplicity. He should look to the prosperity of his subjects, promote the worthy and punish the wicked, do justice to people in open courts and above all follow the will of God.⁹⁷ It is often emphasised that above all a king exists for the sake of his subjects, that governments are for peoples and not peoples for governments. “A worthy sovereignty is the result of the best (means of) protection of its subjects. A sovereign is great or dignified by reason of the care of his people.”⁹⁸ “The learned kings

* * Dk. IX. 608. * * Dk. III. 180-3. * * Dk. VI. 422.

of the State, with the view of ruling with a high degree of efficiency, should strive (for the fulfilment), by Divine Grace, of new and noble aspirations, such as encouraging the learned, the illustrious, and the charitable; being grateful towards those who are loyal to and have affection for the State; conferring of bounty on the supplicants, and on those that are in solicitude owing to poverty; gratifying with a good and befitting remuneration annually the learned men who may be in constant anxiety for having to labour for their food and livelihood.”⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Dk. IX. 609.

CHAPTER IX

THE ETHICAL IN LEGAL REFERENCES IN ZOROASTRIAN LITERATURE

The main document regarding the criminal law of ancient Iran, which has survived to our own times, is the *Vendidad*, 'the Leviticus of the Iranians.' Some Pahlavi writings give us legal information e. g. the *Shayast la Shayast*, the *Dadistan-i-Dinik* and the *Arda Viraf Namah*.

Two types of penalties are in store for breakers of law—penalties on earth and penalties hereafter. Of the former, there are some main kinds. But some crimes are so grave that they are not warded off by punishments inflicted here. These are called "*anaperetha*" 'unatonable.' Among these are the unnatural sin,¹ the eating dead matter,² the burying of the dead,³ and self-pollution.⁴ Capital punishment is reserved for certain

¹ Vd. I. 12.

³ Vd. I. 13, 17.

² Vd. VII. 23.

⁴ Vd. VIII. 27.

offences. The term ‘Margarjan’ is often employed to mean ‘worthy of death.’ This punishment is meted out expressly in two cases. The man who carries a corpse alone and the man who pretends to cleanse one defiled with dead matter or one infected with a pestilential disease, without the necessary knowledge, render themselves liable to this punishment. One instance indeed is mentioned⁵ where an attempt to take the life of another person is said to deserve death. But generally murder is treated more lightly. The reason seems to be that the sort of defilement mentioned above brings in its train general disease, while murder usually affects seriously one man only. Another punishment is the cutting off of the hands and similar parts of the body. Darius inflicted this punishment on a rebel.⁶ But the most common punishment is that of inflicting a certain number of stripes (‘upazanas’), with the two implements, *aspafe ashtra* (the horse whip) and the Sraosho-charana (scourge). The lowest penalty is that of five stripes, the highest is that of ten.

⁵ *Karnamaki = Artakhshir-Papakan*, IX. 16-17.

⁶ Old Persian Inscriptions on Mount Behistan, II. 74, 89.

thousand. The crime or criminal deserving two hundred stripes are called *Pesho-tanu* or *Tanu-peretha* (*Tanafur*), which means ‘One-who pays with his own body’ and ‘payment with one’s body.’ There are varying degrees between the lowest penalty and *Pesho-tanu*.

Now many scholars are led to believe that it is extravagant that minor crimes could actually be accompanied with such heavy physical punishments, and some other interpretation is sought. For instance, it is absurd that the murder of a water-dog could have actually brought upon its perpetrator the punishment of ten thousand stripes. Hence the term “*upazana*” is derived not from Av. “*Zan*” to strike, but from Av. “*Az*” to drive. Then the translation of the formula runs thus “Let the offender drive away (from the country) so many of those noxious animals, which are fit to be driven away with the horse-whip and so many with the Sraosho-charana. Thus the community will derive some substantial benefit and at the same time punishment will be inflicted.”⁷ Or as we see in the later Pahlavi writ-

⁷ This view is strongly supported by Geiger. *The Civilisation of Ancient Iran.*

ings, the bodily punishment is remitted for a money-fine. In the Revaets, two hundred stripes are considered equal to three hundred stars or thirteen hundred and fifteen rupees; a stripe is therefore equal to nearly six rupees.

It is reasonable to inquire into the principle upon which these penalties are adjusted to various crimes. Here it is useful to remember that the *Vendidad* is not a civil code, but includes a criminal law administered mostly by the priests. Hence we observe that while transgressions against religious precepts are severely punished, offences against public order, which are tried by the secular tribunal are accompanied by milder punishments. But we are still surprised to find that while homicide is punished with ninety stripes, the murder of a water-dog carries with it the punishment of ten thousand stripes. The reason seems to be that all violations of the laws of sanitation affect disastrously the whole population, but a homicide affects one man only. The ancient priests might have based the severity of punishment in the case of a dog upon the enormous value for the general well-being which they attached to that creature.

All punishments are generally dealt out by the priests or the legal authorities. But in certain cases, any man can take the law into his own hands and inflict the punishment himself. Thus any man who catches in the act, the sodomite, the courtesan, the highwayman, the corpse-burner, might kill him. If, however, a non-Zoroastrian commits these offences, without knowing the sinfulness of his actions, confession and non-repetition of the act are sufficient for him.⁸

In ambiguous cases where it was not easy to identify the offender, the ordeal was resorted to ; appealing thus to the invisible powers to decide the matter. Siyavush passed through two burning piles of wood and issued safe ; and thus his innocence was established. Sometimes the ordeal was performed with boiling water.

Now let us turn to offences. All breach of contracts was accompanied with severe punishments. If a man broke a word-contract, he was punished with three hundred stripes of each type,⁹ if he broke a hand-contract, six hundred stripes of each type.¹⁰ If he broke a

⁸ Vd. III. 40. ⁹ Vd. IV. 11. ¹⁰ Vd. IV. 12.

sheep-contract, with seven hundred stripes;¹¹ if an ox-contract was broken, the punishment was of eight hundred stripes.¹² A breach of a man-contract and a field-contract were respectively punished with nine hundred and a thousand stripes of both kinds.¹³ Not only he but his near relations in all these cases will be held to be a party to the sin, and will be liable to undergo similar punishment.¹⁴

Bodily injuries also brought with them penalties. Seven types of outrages are mentioned in the *Vendidad*.¹⁵ (1) *Agerepta* "stroke." The crime of rising up with a weapon in one's hand is *agerepta*. The penalty in the first instance is five stripes, but with the repetition of the act, the punishment rises till it reaches two-hundred stripes, for the eighth time.¹⁶ (2) *Avaorishta* "blow" when a man brandishes a weapon, he is guilty of this offence. Ten stripes is the punishment for the first time and two hundred times for the seventh repetition.¹⁷ (3) *Aredus* (wound). Here the penalty is fifteen stripes at first, but it rises to two hundred stripes for the sixth repetition.¹⁸

¹¹ Vd. IV. 13. ¹⁴ Vd. IV. 5-10. ¹⁷ Vd. IV. 22, 25.

¹² Vd. IV. 14. ¹⁵ Vd. IV. 17. ¹⁸ Vd. IV. 26, 29.

¹³ Vd. IV. 15, 16. ¹⁶ Vd. IV. 18-20.

(4) *Xvara* 'sore wound,' is punished with thirty stripes for the first crime and the fifth repetition carries the punishment to two hundred stripes.¹⁹ (5) For *takat-vohuni* 'bloody wound' the punishment is fifty stripes for the first offence, which is raised to two hundred stripes, for the fourth repetition.²⁰ (6) *Asto-bid* 'bone-breaking.' The first offence is punishable with seventy stripes and the tanafur is reached on the third repetition.²¹ (7) *Fraza-baodhah* 'rendering unconscious or causing death.' The penalty is ninety stripes and a single repetition makes a tanafur.²²

Thefts and robberies were duly punished. The punishment is either fining or mutilation or imprisonment. Theft of a dirham cost the offender two dirhams, one ear, ten blows and a slight imprisonment.²³ Theft of another dirham meant a fine of four dirhams, forfeiture of both ears, thirty blows and double imprisonment.²⁴ The right hand was cut off on the third repetition and theft of five hundred dirhams was punishable by hanging.²⁵ A robber was compelled to restore property four times

¹⁹ Vd. IV. 30, 33. ²² Vd. IV. 40, 42. ²⁵ Sd. 327.

²⁰ Vd. IV. 34, 36. ²³ Sd. 326.

²¹ Vd. IV. 37, 39. ²⁴ Sd. 327.

as much as he had taken and was even killed, if public safety required it.²⁶

The defilement of the earth, a sacred element, is held a serious crime. A punishment of five hundred stripes is inflicted on a man who fails to disinter a corpse which he knows to be buried.²⁷ It is raised to a thousand stripes, if the period extends to a year.²⁸ If the neglect extends to two years, the offence becomes unatonable.²⁹ A state of severe penance is ordained for carrying the corpse alone. The culprit is taken to a dry lonely place, where he will be given the coarsest food and worn-out clothes. And when he grows old in this way his neck is cut off.³⁰ If a worshipper of Mazda does not fasten the well, so that the corpse eating dogs and birds carry the bones to the water and the trees, his sin amounts to *tanafur*.³¹ The punishment amounts to four hundred stripes, where a man who has touched a corpse touches water and trees without being cleansed.³² If a person wilfully carries dead matter to water and fire, he is worthy of

²⁶ Sd. 328.

³⁰ Vd. III. 15, 21.

²⁷ Vd. III. 36.

³¹ Vd. VI. 47, 48.

²⁸ Vd. III. 37.

³² Vd. VIII. 104, 106.

²⁹ Vd. III. 39.

death.³³ Waste of unnecessary cloth on the dead bodies brings with it a punishment ranging from four hundred to a thousand stripes.³⁴

If the worshippers of Mazda shall sow or water, within the year, the piece of ground whereon dogs and men have died, they are Peshotanus.³⁵ They are also Peshotanus, if they shall not look on the ground for any bones, hair, dung, urine, or blood that may be there.³⁶ If a man shall throw on the ground a bone of a dead dog, or of a dead man, as large as the top joint of the little finger and if grease or marrow flow from it on to the ground, the punishment is thirty stripes.³⁷ The penalty rises gradually for greater and greater defilement, till it reaches a thousand stripes, when the body of the dead dog or a man is thrown on the ground.³⁸ The man who brings fire into a house in which a man has died, within nine nights in winter and a month in summer becomes a Peshotanu.³⁹

The sin of cooking a corpse is unatonable and punishable with death.⁴⁰ The man who has

³³ Sd. 336.

³⁷ Vd. VI. 10, 11.

³⁴ Vd. VIII. 23-25.

³⁸ Vd. VI. 24, 25.

³⁵ Vd. VI. 4, 5.

³⁹ Vd. V. 43, 44.

³⁶ Vd. VI. 8, 9.

⁴⁰ Vd. I. 17. VIII. 73-4.

eaten of the carcase of a dog or a man is unclean for ever. His burrow shall be dug out, his heart shall be torn out, his bright eyes shall be put out.⁴¹

The penalties attached to any maltreatment of dogs are very rigorous. A dog kills thousands of the creatures of the Evil Spirit and protects sheep and cattle. If a man shall smite a shepherd's dog so that it becomes unfit for work, he shall pay for the loss due to the mischief.⁴² The killing of a shepherd-dog means a penalty of eight hundred stripes.⁴³ The penalty as regards some other dogs varies from five hundred to a thousand stripes.⁴⁴ But the murder of a water-dog carries with it the heaviest punishment of ten thousand stripes or its equivalent. "He shall pay ten thousand stripes.....He shall godly and piously bring into the fire of Ahura Mazda ten thousand hard, well-dried, well-examined wood, to redeem his own soul;" or "He shall godly and piously tie ten thousand bundles of Baresma.....He shall offer up to the good waters ten thousand Zaothra libations with the

⁴¹ Vd. VII. 24.

⁴³ Vd. XIII. 12.

⁴² Vd. XIII. 10.

⁴⁴ Vd. XIII. 4, 12-15.

Haoma and the milk. He shall kill ten thousand snakes of those that go upon the belly." Other noxious creatures such as tortoises, land-frogs, waterfrogs, ants, worms, may be killed, or he shall give to godly men twice the set of seven implements for the fire, or war-implements to warriors or agricultural implements to the husbandman, or procure water for them or stables for their oxen, or he shall promote marriage between the faithful.⁴⁵

Heavy penalties are attached to various offences connected with sexual relations. A worshipper of Mazda who suppresses the issue of a woman with the whites, becomes a Peshotanu.⁴⁶ If a man shall again and again lasciviously touch the body of a woman, who has the whites or sees blood, so that the whites turn to the blood or the blood turns to the whites, the penalty for the first time is thirty stripes, for the second time fifty stripes, for the third time seventy stripes, for the fourth time ninety stripes.⁴⁷ Whosoever shall lie in sexual intercourse with a woman who has the whites or sees blood, does no better

⁴⁵ Vd. XIV. 1-18. ⁴⁷ Vd. XVI. 14-16.

⁴⁶ Vd. XVI. 13.

deed than if he should burn the corpse of his own son.⁴⁸ If the act is done by both parties wilfully, the man shall undergo the punishment of a thousand stripes, and atone for it by other meritorious deeds such as killing of thousands of noxious creatures, making of sacred offerings, and building of bridges.⁴⁹ The crime of a woman who has brought forth a still-born child and who drinks water to quench her thirst amounts to a tanafur.⁵⁰ A man who has intercourse with a pregnant woman and if the pregnant woman comes to grief thereby, becomes a Peshotanu.⁵¹ The unnatural sin is unatonable if it is voluntarily submitted to.⁵² But if it is forced then the penalty is eight hundred stripes.⁵³ The same deed if done with a woman is equally liable to punishment.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Vd. XVI. 16, 17.

⁵² Vd. VIII. 27.

⁴⁹ Vd. XVIII. 67-74.

⁵³ Vd. VIII. 26.

⁵⁰ Vd. VII. 70-72.

⁵⁴ Sd. 268.

⁵¹ Vd. XV. 8.

CHAPTER X

THEOLOGICAL AND METAPHYSICAL IDEAS

Principles of moral conduct are generally rooted in philosophical and religious conceptions. A man's conduct may depend very much upon his view concerning his own nature and place in the universe. The general ideas about himself and his relations to the universe and to God largely determine a man's standpoint in morality. The ethical and theological aspect of thought being thus closely connected with each other, the nature and character of one is bound to influence the nature and character of the other. This is true of Zoroastrianism. Hence to arrive at a well-defined idea of Zoroastrian ethics we must briefly examine the fundamental principles of Zoroastrianism in their ethical connection.

Central in Zoroastrianism is the doctrine of God, the supreme power dominating the

universe, and called Ahura Mazda. The sun and fire are sacred and prayers are offered up before them; but it is always understood that these are nothing more than symbols. Zarathustra preaches no worship of natural forces in the modern sense of worship. The Gathas show that no natural object however great or powerful may in any way occupy a position similar to that of Ahura Mazda. This clearly means that there are higher categories in the philosophy of Zoroaster than those of matter and force. It means the recognition of the spiritual element as fundamental in reality. The influence of such beliefs upon Parsi ethics is evident. If the universe is something more than a blind play of forces, a chaotic whirl of atoms, life must be more than a game of chance. As nature appears to be guided, directed, and controlled, by some agency, so also there seems to be a superior power in relation to man, having effect upon the play of his impulses. Of this Zarathustra in the Gathas has no shadow of doubt.

Mention of two powers is made in most Parsi religious writings: the Good and the Evil, Ahura Mazda and Ahriman. What relation

have these, one to the other ? "Thus are the primeval spirits who as a pair and yet each independent in his action, have been famed (of old). (They are) a better thing, they two, and a worse as to thought, as to word, as to deed."¹ "Yea when the two spirits come together at the first to make life, and life's absence, and to determine how the world at last shall be (ordered), for the wicked (hell) the worst life, for the holy (heaven) the best mental state."² This seems to mean that there were two powers from the beginning, the one the author of all good things, the other the author of all evil. But the two powers have not equal status. Zoroastrianism recognises the absolute and unqualified superiority of the good spirit over the evil one. The evil spirit is not omniscient and almighty.³ He is in darkness; he has a backward understanding; and he will not exist in future.⁴ He is impotent.⁵ Thus, as Dr Casartelli says, the question is a question of terms. If we place emphasis upon the independent origin, and the capacity of the evil spirit, the system becomes dualistic. If

¹ Ys. XXX. 3. ³ Bd. I. 16. ⁵ Bd. I. 22.

² Ys. XXX. 4. ⁴ Bd. I. 3.

we, however, lay greater stress on his impotence and ultimate extinction, the system is monistic.

The universe, therefore, in its ultimate analysis is to be regarded as the expression of the goodness of God. Evil is only a temporary phase in it. But while evil is there, conflict is inexorable. The whole ethical structure is securely based upon the sharp distinction which is here established between the good and the evil, the forces of life and the forces of death. Ahura says to the wicked one: "Neither our minds are in harmony, nor our precepts, nor our comprehensions, nor our beliefs, nor our words, nor our actions, nor our consciences, nor our souls."⁶

The supremacy of Ahura Mazda may also be seen from the attributes ascribed to Him. Ahura Mazda means the "wise lord." He is omniscient,⁷ almighty, righteous,⁸ the creator⁹ and benevolent.¹⁰ He has no beginning and no end.¹¹ He is the discerning arbiter.¹² He is the same now and for ever.¹³ He is self-exis-

⁶ Ys. XIX. 15.

⁹ Ys. XXIX. 4.

¹² Ys. XXIX. 4.

⁷ Ys. XXXIV. 9.

¹⁰ Ys. XLV. 5.

¹³ Ys. XXXI. 7.

⁸ Ys. XXIX. 11.

¹¹ Ys. XXX. 3.

tent.¹⁴ He is like a king;¹⁵ like a kind father¹⁶ or a judge.¹⁷ He is of unlimited time and knowledge.¹⁸ He is wise and sagacious.¹⁹

Ahura Mazda finds willing instruments to help Him in the ministering angels, which surround Him. These are six — Vohu Manah, "Good Mind," Asha, "Righteousness," Khshathra Vairyā "wished for kingdom," Armaiti, "Devotion" Haurvatat "Perfection" and Ameretat, "Immortality." Each of these embodies some specific virtue and also performs some function as a guardian spirit. Then there are Sraosha representing the spirit of Obedience, Atar representing fire, Ashi standing for sanctity and Geush Tashan and Geush Urvan, which are the spirits of the animal life. Next to the Amesha Spentas, the "holy ones," we meet with later on another order of spirits, the Yazatas, the "adorable ones." They are innumerable and embody abstract ideas or natural objects. People offer prayers and sacrifices to them and they grant boons in return.

¹⁴ Dk. I. 33.

¹⁷ Dk. VII. 473.

¹⁵ Dk. I. 36.

¹⁸ Dk. IX. 594.

¹⁶ Dk. VII. 441.

¹⁹ Dk. XII. 26.

Against Ahura Mazda and his angels stand Ahriman and the demons who constitute his army. He is styled “Angra Mainyu” or the Evil spirit. He is independent of the Good spirit as regards his origin. He is full of death.²⁰ He is a tyrant, and the worst liar. He is a great deceiver and leads people to destruction.²¹ He is the author of disease and death.²² But his ultimate annihilation is certain.²³ His followers are his creation and they support his cause. They are also doomed to misery and destruction.

All glimpses into moral truth vouchsafed to Zarathustra and to the other saints are due to the inspiration received from God according to their faith. Ahura Mazda is said to have appointed “a just, controlling guide for those whom he has made.”²⁴ He is besought to “teach us the paths through righteousness.”²⁵ “And do thou, O Lord, the great Creator, come to me with Thy Good Mind.”²⁶ The Gathas are all told by Ahura Mazda to Zartosht.²⁷ As regards Mathre, it is said that “no portion of them is (composed) by the

²⁰ Yt. III. 13. ²³ Bd. I. 3. ²⁶ Ys. XXVIII. 7.

²¹ Vd. XIX. 3. ²⁴ Ys. LI. 5. ²⁷ Dk. I. 3.

²² Bd. III. 17. ²⁵ Ys. XXXIV. 12.

wisdom of man and they could not be composed from a number of current traditions.”²⁸ “The wisdom intended for the professors of the Mazdiasni religion—every (portion) of that wisdom,—is not obtained by the reasoning faculty (of man), but it is made known by the giver of existence to Mazdiasni religion and its Revealer.”²⁹ But God does not give truth to the beloved in sleep. There is here no *Yogi* who gets divine illumination in trance. The saint must actually strive for truth; he must ask questions of the supreme spirit. All ethical and religious truth comes from God to man, especially through the saints and prophets. “Be it known that, the Yazds shine in men owing to (their) goodness and cease to shine owing to (their) evil.”³⁰ “Be it known that, of the many evidences of the Mazdayasnian faith being the word of God, these three are the chief:—First that it contains perfect wisdom. Second, that it contains more of the truth than other faiths. Third, that to him who is anxious about religion it gives a complete knowledge about the existence of God.”³¹

²⁸ Dk. I. 2.

²⁹ Dk. VIII. 436.

³⁰ Dk. I. 54.

³¹ Dk. VII. 467.

Turning to the question of the relation between God and man, we find that God helps the righteous in all their endeavours for a life divine. Man must in return place his trust in Him and worship Him. Firmness of faith is deemed absolutely necessary. The deed which produces pleasure to God is the remaining firm in the Mazdiasni religion and the keeping people righteous.³² "A man becomes more and more good by putting more and more faith in the religion of Ahurmazd."³³ "From trust in God arises a heroic heart."³⁴ "(It is) God in Whom every one has his trust, regarding his own affair, except him who has no wisdom."³⁵ The efficacy of prayer is recognised. A prayer should be recited when a person dies. "One should offer supplications and prayers on behalf of any (deceased person) with whom one had acquaintance."³⁶ "It behoves us, to pay homage to, that is to worship, Spenamino Auharmazd, the Creator of the good creation, with thought, word and deed, for His gift of Life and Body."³⁷ To fire special reverence is due; because we owe to it

³² Dk. I. 9. ³⁴ Dk. XII. 69. ³⁶ Dk. IX. 648.

³³ Dk. I. 55. ³⁵ Dk. XI. 52. ³⁷ Dk. IX. 641.

the existence and sustenance of man.”³⁸ “It should be scrupulously guarded, and be held as the symbol of worship.”³⁹ Idolatry and demon-worship are clearly repudiated. “The Mazdayasnian should receive instruction as regards the abhorrence of the demons, and the rejection of idolatry.”⁴⁰

Man is free to choose between good and evil. There is no dominating necessity which entirely predetermines the course of his life. “They are a better thing, they two, and a worse, as to thought, word and deed. And between these two let the wisely acting choose aright.”⁴¹ “Hear ye then with your ears; see ye the bright flames with eyes of the better mind. It is for a decision as to religions, man and man, each individually for himself.”⁴² God has given to all men sufficient ability to save themselves from sin as well as from Ahriman the source of their sins and woes.⁴³

Fate or the unknown factor in all human situations, which often decides events in a mysterious way is recognised especially in the *Menuki-khrat*. “Even with the might and the

³⁸ Dk. IX. 644. ³⁹ Dk. IX. 635. ⁴⁰ Ys. XXX. 2.

³⁹ Dk. IX. 645. ⁴¹ Ys. XXX. 3. ⁴³ Dk. VII. 441.

powerfulness of wisdom and knowledge, even then it is not possible to contend with destiny. Because when predestination as to virtue, or as to the reverse, comes forth, the wise becomes wanting in duty, and the astute in evil becomes intelligent; the faint-hearted becomes braver, and the braver becomes faint-hearted; the diligent becomes lazy, and the lazy acts diligently.”⁴⁴ “As to him who is a lazy, ignorant and bad man when his destiny becomes a helper, that laziness of his then becomes like unto diligence, that ignorance unto knowledge, and that vileness unto goodness. And as to him who is a wise, worthy, and good man, when his destiny is an opponent, wisdom of his then turns to stupidity and foolishness and that worthiness to ignorance; and his knowledge, skill and worthiness become manifestly secluded.”⁴⁵ “Happiness and adornment, celebrity and dominion, skill and suitability are not through the will and action of men, but through the appointment, destiny and will of the sacred being.”⁴⁶ It is evident here that a man’s part in his own making is almost wiped out. However, something is still left to man’s

⁴⁴ Mkh. 54.

⁴⁵ Mkh. 93.

⁴⁶ Mkh. 10.

exertion. "It is not possible to provide for one's self, through exertion, that benefit which is not ordained ; but a morsel of that which is ordained comes on by means of exertion. Yet the exertion, when it is fruitless in the worldly existence, through the sacred beings not being with it, still comes, afterwards, to one's assistance in the spiritual existence, and outweighs in the balance."⁴⁷ In the *Dadistan-i-Dinik* also, an attempt is made to adjust the claims of the human agency and super-human agency. "There are some things through destiny, and there are some through action...that life, wife and child, authority and wealth are through destiny and the righteousness and the wickedness of priesthood, warfare, and husbandry are through action."⁴⁸ Another question is raised whether any modification in the programme of fate, any change in the otherwise irreversible operations of destiny, is possible through prayer and good works. A distinction is drawn between destiny and divine providence. "Destiny is that which is ordained from the beginning, and divine providence is that which they (the sacred beings), also grant otherwise. But the

⁴⁷ Mkh. 54.

⁴⁸ Dd. 215.

sacred beings provide and manifest in the spiritual existence little of that grant.”⁴⁹

Almost every religion has some sort of doctrine of atonement. Though the law of causation is acknowledged by Zarathustra in the field of ethics, that out of the good comes good and out of evil evil, if a man repents of his evil he has much ground for hope. Expiation takes many forms; it includes the recital of prayers and the confession of sins before a Dastur or a righteous man of any other holy object and the sincere repentance experienced in one’s soul and the undergoing of many punishments and the performance of many good deeds. Not only words and deeds should show the changed attitude of the soul but it should be clearly expressed by altered character. “Again, if (a man) repent by means of his tongue and deeds, of the smallest sin, and if his mind is not (fit) for forgiveness, then he is not a redeemer of himself (from sin).”⁵⁰ “Expiation is that wherein one is in contrition, with repentance for a sin committed and does not commit that sin again.”⁵¹ Other-

⁴⁹ Mkh. 55.

⁵¹ Dk. Vol. X. Bk. VI. 14.

⁵⁰ Dk. II. 69.

wise, the former sin is not expiated.⁵² Further the repentance must be heartfelt.⁵³ When these conditions are well observed, repentance is said to have power to remove all sins except a few known as *anaperetha* or unatonable. These are the burying or burning of corpses, cooking and eating dead matter, unnatural intercourse. "The man here hath repented of all his evil thoughts, words and deeds. If he has committed any other evil deeds it is remitted by his repentance. If he has committed no other evil deeds he is absolved by his repentance, for ever and ever."⁵⁴ "The religion of Mazda, O Spitama Zarathustra takes away from him who makes confession of it the bonds of his sin; it takes away (the sin of) breach of trust;.....it takes away (the sin of) deeds for which there is no atonement; it takes away the worst sin of usury; it takes away any sin that may be sinned."⁵⁵ Thus even unatonable sins could be removed. "A man's sins are expiated by his perfect knowledge of the divine faith and by his doing good works for his final renovation."⁵⁶

⁵² Sd. 309. ⁵⁴ Vd. III. 21. ⁵⁶ Dk. VII. 476.

⁵³ Dk. I. 9 ⁵⁵ Vd. VIII. 29.

"Every sin that is not repented of, (i.e. which is not expiated by countervailing good deeds) entails a condemnation to punishment."⁵⁷ The requirement for the expiation of sins and for becoming pure through the expurgation of them is to implore forgiveness, to express contrition, and to repent in the presence of the Lord. As the sins are many in number, so are likewise their atonements various.⁵⁸ Thus the punishment for all grave sins such as killing men without justice, disobeying the behests of the king, is death. The expiation of all other sins is by pecuniary fines. "Through expiation, there remains no passage to hell. And with non-expiation there remains no passage to heaven."⁵⁹

The belief in future existence pervades the whole literature. The soul of a man is not destroyed with his death. All the anomalies and the imperfections of the earthly existence are removed in the life Beyond. The righteous are rewarded, and the sinful punished here as well as hereafter. The former go to heaven and enjoy its pleasures. Here we

⁵⁷ Dk. IX. 629. ⁵⁹ Dk. Vol. X. Bk. VI. 14.

⁵⁸ Dk. IX. 631.

note that in the *Gathas*, the conception of paradise is an exalted state of mind. It is variously styled "the Abode of Good Mind," "the glorious heritage of Good Thought" and so on. Hell is a state of mental agony. It is called "the House of the Lie," "of the worst Thought" and so on. "The early Iranian Sage announced the eternal truth that the rewards of Heaven and the punishment of Hell can only be from within. He gave us, we may fairly say through the systems which he has influenced, that great doctrine of subjective recompense, which must work an essential change in the mental habits of every one who receives it."⁶⁰ In the later *Avesta*, mention is made of four kinds of heaven, of thought, of word, of deed and the highest one of endless light. There are also four types of hell. Intermediate between heaven and hell is a place for the mixed people, called Hamistagan.

The Zoroastrians always believed in the immortality of the soul. Zarathustra repeatedly asserts that "weal and immortality" will fall to the lot of the good and righteous. "He who from righteousness (in mind and life)

⁶⁰ Mills. S.B.E. Vol. XXXI. p. xx.

shall verily perform for me, for Zarathustra, that which is most helpful (for my cause)..... on him shall they bestow rewards beyond this earth.”⁶¹ All the evidence points to a doctrine of personal immortality. “All good persons will obtain immortality and a final well-regulated constitution through the instrumentality of the will of the Lord Creator having reference to His final intentions.”⁶² By communion with God “the soul becomes immortal and adorned with the ample life of eternity in the second life.”⁶³ “Be it known that the duration of the soul is everlasting.”⁶⁴ Along with this belief appear the ideas of final renovation, millennium and resurrection. Ahura Mazda will come at the end of Creation and the great work of renovation will be accomplished.⁶⁵ By a miracle “there will be a final renovation and men will become immortal.”⁶⁶ “The fruit of the body and the fruit of the soul (is) the Renovation; and the fruit of the Renovation (is) undecaying joy.”⁶⁷ “The world, shall be never dying, not decaying, never rotting ever living, ever useful

⁶¹ Ys. XLVI. 19.

⁶⁵ Ys. XLIII. 5.

⁶² Dk. I. 22.

⁶⁶ Dk. VII. 472.

⁶³ Dk. VIII. 425.

⁶⁷ Dk. XI. 87.

⁶⁴ Dk. V. 301.

(profit-making), having power to fulfil all wishes, when dead shall arise and immortal life shall come, when the settlements shall all be deathless.”⁶⁸ Again: “Let Angra Mainyu, the Evil Spirit, be hid beneath the earth; let the Devas disappear;—let the dead arise, and let the bodily life be sustained in these now lifeless bodies.”⁶⁹

The evil forces of the universe are sure to succumb before the good ones and the ultimate triumph of the latter: that is the firm faith of Zoroastrianism. But the optimistic spirit goes further and secures salvation not for the good only, but for the evil also. It is true that the evil souls will be tried at the time of the final collective judgment and required to go through blazing fire. But this is the cleansing process for them and it will lead to their purification. Then Ahura Mazda will at last take back to Himself all the creatures that are created by Him.⁷⁰ The final triumph of Spentomainyu over Angromainyu is by his sufficient superior strength.⁷¹ It may be noted that Soshyos or saviour prophets help the world in this process of redemption.

⁶⁸ Yt. XIX. 11.

⁷⁰ Dk. XII. 7.

⁶⁹ Yt. XIX. 12.

⁷¹ Dk. VII. 462.

We come to the final question as to how the ultimate good, the *bonum consummatum*, is represented in these writings. What is the final bliss of the righteous? The goal of human life is not conceived by the Parsis as in the Buddhist idea of Nirvana. Here are two significant passages: "But Ahura Mazda will give both universal weal and immortality in the fulness of his righteous order and from himself as the head of dominion, (with his saints). And he will likewise give the Good Mind's vigorous might to him who in spirit and deed is his friend."⁷² Again "Then shall begin the infinite time (of happiness) and then shall happen the final renovation, the impoverishment of the *Druj*, the resurrection of the dead, and the attainment of the final body and the redemption (from hell) of the people of this world; and hence mankind shall live in eternal felicity, and in splendour, and with immutable wisdom, will, action and (endless) time."⁷³ There is here no absorption of the individual in the Absolute, no annihilation of the self, but a realisation of the self in a kingdom of God, a realisation, fuller and richer than is possible here.

⁷² Ys. XXXI, 21.

⁷³ Dk. V. 332.

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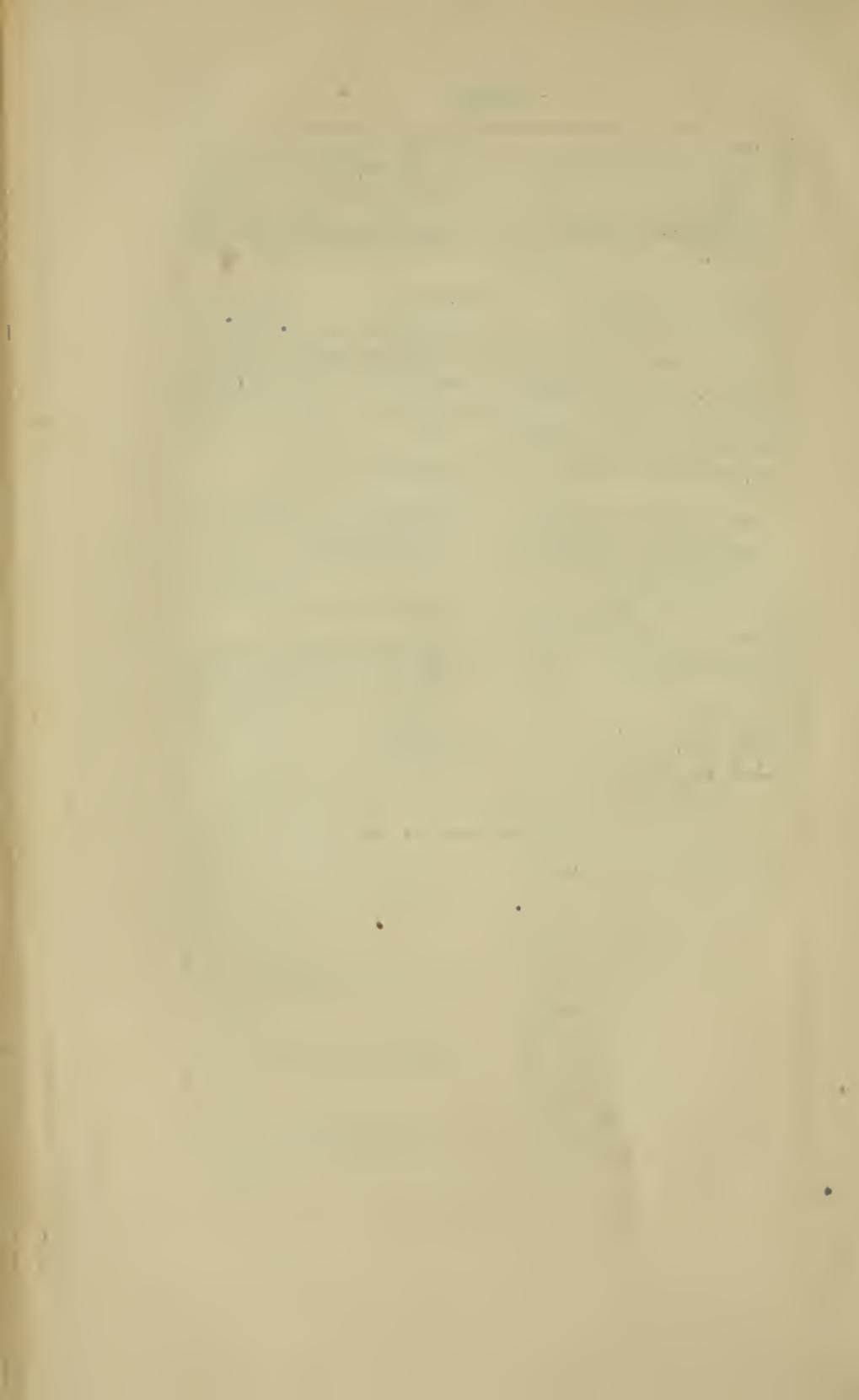
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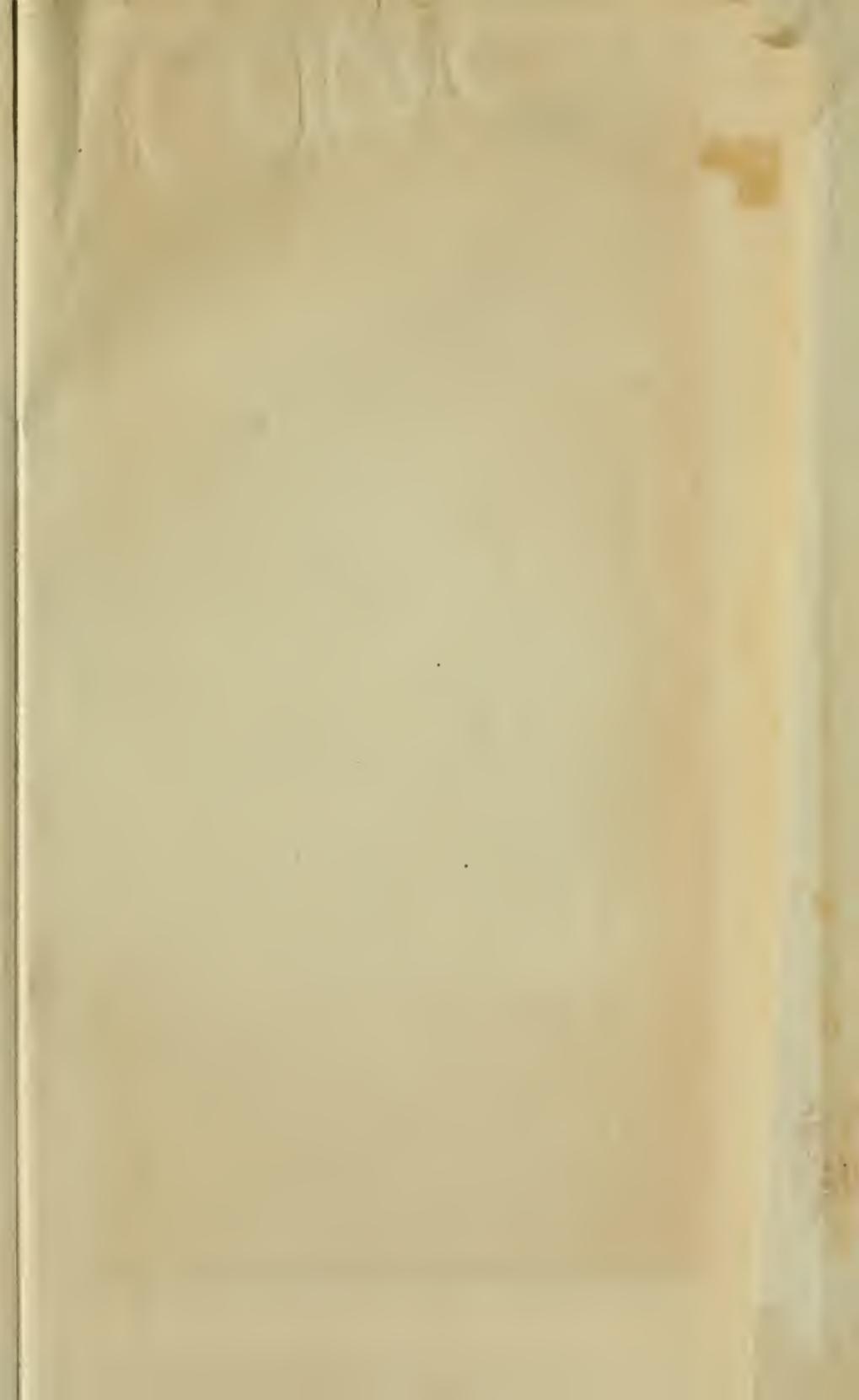
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